

# Using *The Darjeeling Limited* and Travel Blogs for a Reel and Real-Life Thematic Analysis of India's Rail Tourism



## Thesis

## BSc Tourism

**Date:** 24.06.2014

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I hereby declare that this thesis is wholly the work of Julia Hammacher. Any other contributors have either been referenced in the prescribed manner or are listed in the acknowledgements together with the nature and the scope of their contribution.

Where I have consulted the published work of others this is always clearly attributed. Where I have quoted from the work of others the source is always given. A list of the references used, is included. An appropriate referencing style is used throughout. With the exception of such quotations this thesis is entirely my own work. I have read and understand the penalties associated with plagiarism as stated in the Student Charter.

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## **Abstract**

Wes Anderson's film *the Darjeeling Limited* is based on the story of three brothers who go on a railway journey throughout India. However, films are only contested reproductions of nature. How do real-life tourists who chose to travel through the country by train actually perceive the journey and how do their impressions differ from or are similar to the three brothers' experiences in the film? This research intends to examine this by carrying out a thematic analysis of the film and of existing websites and travel blogs dedicated to the discussion of 'doing rail tourism', drawing on current debates such as orientalism and spiritual tourism. The findings of this research will contribute to people's understanding of how certain representations and discourses shape tourist expectations, how they influence the way the 'other' is consumed and how power over destinations is exercised by texts. Even though India is often represented as unsafe for foreigners, this image is not always justified. Results show that railway tourism is favored by many travelers for its exclusive character, the offered chance to interact with locals, to experience India as authentically as possible and derive meaning from the journey. Even though some films stimulate tourists' desire to experience the reel settings, this was not the case with *the Darjeeling Limited*. Still, the unique character of IR to mediate between two different worlds inspired the creation of the film.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Generally speaking, when looking at tourism development on a global scale, one can say that tourism has become an important sector within the world economy. Predictions go as far as saying that by 2020, tourism will become the largest industry worldwide (Delener, 2010). During the last years Asia became increasingly popular as a tourist destination. Within the Asian continent, people like visiting India due to the exotic and romantic charm presented in popular

media. Edwards Said (2003) described why so many travellers were, and still are, attracted to the Orient, stating:

*“Travelling to the region, European writers, painters, and photographers drew a romanticized image of the Orient, which became constructed as the contrasting, irrational, exotic, mysterious and mystical ‘Other’ of Europe” (Said, 2003, p. 1).*

One representation of the experience of travelling through India can be seen in Wes Anderson’s (2007) film *the Darjeeling Limited*. The film is based on the story of three brothers named Francis, Peter and Jack, who go on a spiritual journey throughout India by train, each dealing differently with their father’s recent death. Taking the train named *Darjeeling Limited*, they travel first class and end their journey in a convent where they visit their mother. On their way they make several stops at sights and sites they put on their itinerary, among which are markets and temples. All the way through their journey their aim is to renew and improve their brotherly bond and in general to deal with complicated relationships in their lives, while also seeking spiritual elements and looking for meaning.

Whereas *the Darjeeling Limited* provides the perspective of travelling by train thorough India from a Western view, which is defined in this research as a North-American and European view, web blogs dedicated to doing railway tourism in India also provide an understanding of the topic. Bloggers critically assess their travel undertakings and tell stories about experiences made (Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007).

A gap in the literature could be identified as to the missing data, analysis and discussion about Indian rail tourism in general and more specifically in the cinematic and blog representation of Indian rail tourism. Therefore the general research question is: **What do the film *the Darjeeling Limited* and travel blogs say about Indian Rail Tourism?**

More specifically, this research seeks to answer the following sub-questions:

- What are the dominant themes in the movie and in actual rail tourist blogs?
- What are the similarities and differences?

- What are the implications of these similarities and differences?

The main research question and sub-questions are directed at analysing how the film, as one element of representation, compares to the representations found in travel blogs. In this paper the travel blogs are understood as the real-life experience, because they are written by tourists who have actually experienced the railway journeys and their blog entries are not subject to researcher bias, while the film is a reel space, a cinematic and fictional illustration of the railway journey. Answering the research questions will highlight marketing and wider social implications for different stakeholders involved.

This research intends to fill the mentioned gap in literature by carrying out qualitative research, mostly by conducting a thematic analysis of the film and of existing websites and travel blogs dedicated to the discussion of 'doing rail tourism', paying special attention to linguistic features which are made use of. The findings of this research will contribute to people's understanding of the similarities and differences between media presentation of the Indian Railway on the one hand, and how tourists actually perceive this way of travelling on the other. Thereby, tourists will be more aware of certain representations for marketing and other purposes and can gain a more holistic picture before travelling through India by train specifically, and generally broaden their knowledge about different elements of railway tourism. Marketing companies can possibly choose to adapt their marketing to match tourist's actual experiences.

As a first step an extensive literature review will be carried out. Here, the general topic, railway tourism and film with focus on India and all its current debates, will be reviewed and why it is important for tourism. After presenting the methodology, the thematic analysis will be performed which involves different techniques to point out certain themes, put them into hierarchy and discuss them in relation to concepts or theories (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Finally, the thesis will end in a conclusion which summarises the key findings and highlights the implications of this research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Rail tourism in India received little attention so far in terms of research and literature. To gain an overview over the topic in general and debates surrounding it, the author reviews in the following literature written by other researchers about the topics Indian tourism; Rail Tourism and Indian Railways; Film, Travel blogs and Tourism; Spirituality and Indian tourism; Discourses and representations: Orientalism and discourses and representations: Post-colonialism and tourism in India. The review concludes how this research will contribute to the reviewed literature, followed by the conceptual framework which demonstrates the underlying dynamics of this paper.

### *Indian Tourism*

In Asia Pacific, the annual growth rate of tourist arrivals is 6,7 % every year, which is, to put it in perspective, almost twice as much as the world average of 3,9 % (Enright & Newton, 2005). In 2020, Asia Pacific will become the world's second largest tourism region by arrivals and therefore overtake America (Enright & Newton, 2005). However, despite the undisputed growth of tourism, a change of demand has taken place. In fact, there has been "a trend to flexibilization of the tourism product by a form of customization" (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003, p. 1) causing a decline in the demand for mass tourism products. Actually, the trend goes to "new-sophisticated consumers" who "seek authentic and unique experiences" (Buhalis, 2000, p. 20).

India is known globally for its cultural heritage, astonishing landscapes including plains, scorching deserts, snow-covered mountains and rich art forms and can therefore satisfy this current customer trend. It also appeals to tourists for simply being different and its "oriental charm and mystery" (Chaudhary, 1996, p. 616). Many tourists want to experience the country hands-on and seek authenticity which is why 92% of foreign tourists belong to the non-packaged category and stay for around 28 days while only 8% are package tourists staying relatively shorter (Chaudhary, 1996). Despite the country's assets, India is regarded to as the



'The Sleeping Tiger' in tourism media (Chaudhary, 1996). International tourist arrivals are rather low compared to other South and East Asian destinations (UNWTO, 2013). Statistically, China is the leading country when it comes to tourist arrivals with 57,7 million in 2012 (UNWTO, 2013), followed by Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia. India, in comparison, records only 6,6 million arrivals in 2012 (UNWTO, 2013). According to Chaudhary (1996) the reason for these low numbers lies in the media representation of India which is characterized as having "poor sanitary conditions, tiresome immigration and customs procedures, unhelpful people, unethical traders, poor accommodation, inadequate transport facilities, non-availability of the right type of food" (p.618). The safety level in India is also perceived to be low which is problematic since, according to existing literature, a crucial factor for determining a destination's competitiveness is the degree of safety (Enright & Newton, 2005). In fact, Enright and Newton (2005) show that safety is ranked first among the attractors ranked by importance within the Asian Pacific. In a more recent source Chaudhary (2000) argues that India has a high potential to develop as a cultural destination if the negative image of its infrastructure and safety fronts could be improved by for instance carrying out an image promotion campaign.

### *Rail Tourism and Indian Railways*

The UNWTO defines tourism as "the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (UNWTO, 1995, p.10). Consequently, for tourism to occur distance must be travelled and a stay must take place away from one's usual environment. This implies that people have to travel. Today there are many transport means available for tourists. For domestic trips the most popular one is still the car, followed by the plane and then the train (UNWTO, UNEP & WMO, 2008).

It was during the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain (1780-1850) when the foundations for today's tourism industry were laid. As Karl Marx once said, "Revolutions are the locomotives of history" (Tucker, 1992, p.608) and during the Industrial Revolution history was literally made by

inventing the locomotive. In 1825, the first track for passenger railways was built (Votolato, 2007) and England's first passenger railway opened in 1830 and transported passengers from Canterbury to Whitstable and back (Horner, 1991). People liked travelling by train very much because it was very comfortable, they were allowed to walk around and their clothes and suitcases stayed clean (Votolato, 2007). Another advantage was the fact that the train was the fastest vehicle at that time (Votolato, 2007). Because of the huge demand of passenger trains, the whole railway system in Britain was built, expanded and improved between the 1830s and 1870s (Russ, 2007).

Nowadays railway is one mode by which tourists travel through landscapes worldwide. In comparison to travelling by plane or car, railway tourism attracts people because it offers exclusive encounters with all senses and 'captures everyday life', enabling tourists to experience the country and people in a more authentic way (Hannam, Butler & Paris, 2014). Apart from that, trains offer a certain access to remote places and are relatively affordable compared to other transport modes (Hannam, Butler & Paris, 2014).

In 1851 the train as a transport medium was introduced in India when the first passenger train took off (Bogart & Chaudhary, 2012). The Indian railway system was actually encouraged and set up by the British government since India was at the time underlying the British power as a colony (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). The aim was to operate the whole system by private British companies (Bogart & Chaudhary, 2012). After decades of unsatisfactory management performance by the British government, the Indian government started to take over and in 1910 had already taken a major control, however still exposed under British rule until legal independence in 1947 (Bogart & Chaudhary, 2012).

Today India's railway operator, Indian Railways (IR), is the largest passenger carrier in the world, owned and operated by the Indian government through the Ministry of Railways (Bogart & Chaudhary, 2012). It comprises 115.000 km of track and stops at 7500 stations (KumarYadav, Batham & Kumar Mallik, 2013). IR offers different transport categories like long-distance, but also local trains; there are eight different classes in total but each train only offers a selection of

classes. There are usually two types of compartments: the general compartment without AC, called Sleeper Class, wherein the majority of people travel and the reserved AC compartments, which are most comfortably equipped (Mondal et al., 2012).

Concerning employment Mondal et al. (2012) found out that child labor frequently occurs on IR trains with 3,6 children under the age of 14 per 1000 km of journey. These children frequently exhibit different handicaps or diseases from their occupation which are not treated under any medical attendance (Mondal et al., 2012). Therefore Mondal et al. (2012) call for international awareness to this problem and rehabilitation policies to introduce health- and social securities. Another problem for which IR is widely criticized is the way in which it deals with human waste disposal. The waste is directly disposed onto the track, causing not only environmental pollution but also parasitic infections in local residents (KumarYadav, Batham & Kumar Mallik, 2013).

Due to the country's growing economy and population and consequently the increased traffic volume, the IR is under high pressure which frequently leads to delays and increasing transportation costs (Ghosh, Banerjee & Ganguly, 2012). The population growth has not taken place in a balanced way but rather there are certain regions which have to deal with the increasing pressure by adding new trains to the railway system (Ghosh, Banerjee & Ganguly, 2012). But in general the whole railway infrastructure needs improvement which "is a much more time-consuming process requiring long-term planning and investment, and hence is not undertaken nearly as frequently as introducing new trains." (Ghosh, Banerjee & Ganguly, 2012, p. 2928). Adding to that are the frequent railway accidents, which enumerate a number of deaths and large traffic disruptions (Ghosh, Banerjee & Ganguly, 2012).

According to different websites, *the Darjeeling Limited* train, which as it is portrayed in *the Darjeeling Limited* travels through the whole country, does not actually exist (Urban Ghosts, 2014). However, according to [urbanghostsmedia.com](http://urbanghostsmedia.com), the cinematic train is based on the 'Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR)' which provides service between Siliguri and Darjeeling station (Urban Ghosts, 2014). Built in 1881, this particular railway operation demonstrates well how one railway "mediated experiences of travel and landscape" (Baker, 2013, p.1) and how it

used to offer European travellers “a colonial frontier, reinforcing passengers’ identities and generating touristic modes of observation” (p.1). Baker’s research focuses on the train’s beginning phase when it started operating. Nowadays this train journey is popular with honeymooners and Indian and international tourists (Harrison, 2013). Harrison (2013) writes that the train currently runs for 86 kilometers, making its way up to 2200 meters above sea level. It rides slowly along roads and small shops and Harrison (2013) suggests “you may as well be walking given how close you get to the pandemonium that is India” (p.42). During the ride Indian life can be experienced first-hand by witnessing “people hang[ing] wash[ing], sell[ing] vegetables and drink[ing] tea along the track despite the black soot smoke”(p.42).

### *Film, Travel blogs and Tourism*

Popular media become increasingly prevalent to today’s society. Huisman (2011) argues that television and films influence its viewers to some extent, especially because watching television forms a part of peoples’ everyday lives, and therefore are an important medium to study. While watching, people do not see the world as it actually is through a transparent window but instead films construct a certain image of landscapes and cultures and are therefore a ‘contested reproduction’ of nature (Law, Bunnell & Ong, 2007). These audio visual representations oftentimes result in cultural stereotyping and standardization of non-European and North American ‘others’ (Huisman, 2011). Park and Wilkins (2005) even opine that the representations of people, events and setting portrayed in the media are actually merely reflections of the governing’s class (political) interests.

In the Hollywood film industry tropical paradises are frequently recreated, reinventing visions of ‘the other’ (Law, Bunnell & Ong, 2007). For instance the film ‘The Beach’, based on Alex Garland’s novel, serves as one demonstration of a cinematic adoption of an Asian travel destination that “satirises the Western search for experiential authenticity through travel” (Tzanelli, 2006, p.121).

In regards to the relationship between film and tourism Williams (1998) writes that films “constantly produce and reproduce objects for the tourist gaze” (p.174) and that this influence is very powerful since it changes our subconscious awareness and most remarkably drives peoples’ “desires to see the places portrayed and [inspires] within the travelling public new ways of seeing tourism destinations” (p.174). As an example of how people actually want to experience cinematic representations he specifies the recent growth of theme parks in Japan where one park was built in 1975 based on only a theme of films (Williams, 1998).

In the context of Indian films and tourism one particular genre of films contributes to framing the Indian ‘other’: the Bollywood film. Since the Indian main film industry is placed in Mumbai, which was formerly known as Bombay, and is seen as a parallel industry to the American ‘Hollywood’, the name Bollywood was invented. However, this does not imply that Bollywood is a simulation of North American Hollywood films produced in Los Angeles (Lorenzen & Täube, 2008). Indeed, it “has now developed a strong brand and is a hugely commercial industry with no state subsidies, a mix of big-budget and low-budget films, substantial marketing efforts and a relentless pursuit of blockbusters” (Lorenzen & Täube, 2008, p.286). In 2009 films produced in Bollywood exceeded the number of films produced in the USA with 1200 to 694 (Connell, 2012). Bollywood films are increasingly watched by an international audience and create motivation to travel to India (Lorenzen & Täube, 2008). Tourists who have never visited the country before feel the urge to see the romanticized India as it is portrayed in the films (Bandyopadhyay, 2008). People who have visited before are more interested to experience the modern India, shown in the films’ surroundings (Bandyopadhyay, 2008).

One example of a film portraying everyday life in India is Danny Boyle’s *Slumdog Millionaire*. After this film’s international commercial success, Indian slums became an exotic tourist attraction (Mendes, 2010). Many tourists took part in so called ‘slum tours’ in Dharavi (India’s largest slum) where the film was supposedly shot, however, in reality, the film was shot in other slums around Mumbai (Mendes, 2010). Urry (1990) theorized that tourists see and gaze upon places because they anticipate pleasure from doing so. This anticipation is created and raised by

for instance film and eventually tourists will feel the desire to visit these places (Urry, 1990), as it is the case for the slum tours. Since the location in 'Slumdog Millionaire' is a reel space and the tourists will not find this 'authentic' scene as it is portrayed in the virtual, cinematic landscape images, "the quest is, as tourists themselves may be well aware, for a constructed and fetishized location that could not be replicated in real experience" (Mendes, 2010, p.478). This will lead to problems and misconceptions for tourists when taking part in the slum tours; they will not find the 'real' experience they expected (Mendes, 2010).

Yet another medium of which tourists increasingly get inspired by are travel blogs. Travelers share their personal opinions and reviews of places they have visited and often provide tips, photos and stories. These blog entries can then be read by potential travelers. Travel blogs offer a platform for interpersonal communication and potential networks and relationships can be built (Ong & du Cros, 2012). Results have stressed "the importance of travel blogs in influencing potential customers' destination image perceptions and behavioral intention to travel" (Wang, 2012, p.249). The entries and photos can be seen as a special form of destination advertisement if the opinion expressed about the destination is positive. On the other hand bad reputations will create an unappealing image in tourists' minds. In general tourism advertisements such as travel blogs work by linking images of a certain destination to experiences and ideas people already have (Williams, 2009). Hence, travel blogs can challenge or strengthen images about a destination, as well as essentialize or stereotype a culture (Williams, 2009). Based on this, travel blogs and advertisement in general have the power to construct or modify tourist expectations and can lead to cultural modification (Williams, 2009).

### *Spirituality and Indian tourism*

Originally, tourists were categorized into two categories: either as leisure tourists also referred to mass-tourists, living in their own bubble and ignorant to the foreign culture or as travelling for business reasons (Cohen, 1973). Nowadays, it is known that the tourist cannot be categorized that easily. For many people tourism is more than just the physical act of travelling:

what they seek are spiritual elements, individualism and self-actualisation, summed up as 'meaningful travel' by Wilson and Harris (2006). Willson, McIntosh and Zahra (2013) conclude that "tourist experiences cannot be explored in isolation" (p.164) and "the influence of personal life events may change how an individual derives personal meaning and life purpose from or through tourism" (p.164) and consequently explore how tourism experiences are intertwined with spiritual meaning and vice versa.

In contemporary tourism the act of travelling for religious or pilgrimage purposes is more and more referred to as *religious tourism*. Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) actually conclude in their study that tourism itself can be regarded to as a sacred journey. Travel experiences can be seen as "a complex interaction of one's lived 'spirituality', the tourism experience itself, and the effect of life defining moments to reveal how tourism experiences may become endowed with (spiritual) meaning by individuals, and conversely, how travel may endow individuals with meaningful / spiritual experiences" (Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013, p.163). Despite the fact that every individual subjectively experiences spirituality, three common constructs usually stand out in relation to religious experience: the search for meaning and life purpose, the life-changing moments and the connection in life (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005).

Religious tourism is especially popular in India since its inhabitants have carried out religious practices on a community level for a long time and pilgrimage has been an important element of these practices since ancient times. Religious journeys to India by European and North-American travelers started gaining popularity in the 1960s when celebrities visited the country such as the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, hence boosting India's reputation as a spiritual destination (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). Today, there are even tour operators which offer specialized tours for those seeking such experiences, for instance 'Yoga Journeys' and taking part in religious festivals (e.g. the Kumbha Mela, a Hindu spiritual festival which takes place every three years) (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). Despite these special tours, many visitors are simply attracted by the variety of different religious practices, sites and icons with some special attractions like the many ashrams (traditional Indian monasteries) (Sharpley & Sundaram,

2005). There are visitors, oftentimes permanent tourists, who stay in Indian places or communities because of their “separateness (and its utopian ideals) from the outside world” (p.168). Hence, “is not the journey but the destination that, for this group, is spiritual; rather than tourism as pilgrimage, involving a temporary state of anti-structure [...] and return, it is travel, or escape, to the ‘Other’ ” (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005, p.168).

Concerning temporary tourists, Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) identified three kinds of spiritual tourists. Firstly, they name the *spiritual seekers* who visit for the mere purpose of spiritual experiences. Yet, most tourists visiting religious sites are not actually taking part for a spiritual reason (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). They are categorized as the *tourist trail followers* because they are curious about the sight due to its cultural background or architecture and were advised to visit by relatives or guide books (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). Lastly the *Yoga/meditation practitioners* are discussed. They visit for the specific purpose of meditation and practicing Yoga and therefore experience spirituality to a certain extent (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). Eventually, all types more or less experience some degree of spiritual fulfillment after visiting (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005).

When it comes to experiencing the ‘other’ in relation to the search of cultural authenticity Cohen (1979) points out 5 different types of the tourist experience: the recreational, the diversionary, the experiential, the experimental and the existential mode. All these modes are always observed in relation to the ‘center’ of the tourist. The idea of a person’s center can be explained as a cultural society where one has a feeling of belonging to and feels at home. Over time it turned out that some people live and operate in a society which they can’t identify with, including its views, rules and religious practices. They feel like their center is situated in another society.

In the first, the recreational mode the tourist going on vacation is merely looking for pleasure and recreation. He is in balance with his center and uses the trip to compensate societal pressure. Also, he is not interested in the authenticity of the destination.



In the diversionary mode the tourist is already feeling alienated from his center and wants to experience diversion from every day-life to make the alienation bearable. At the same time he shows no interest in finding a new center that he could belong to.

The next mode, the experiential mode, is already an attempt of the tourist to find authenticity and religion by observing the life of the 'other'. He feels disconnected from his own center and even though he tries to find authentic experiences wherever he travels, he never converts to the center of the other society and remains a stranger. Cohen (1979) connects this mode to pilgrimage because both, the pilgrims and the tourists in this mode are searching for authenticity.

In contrast to the previous mode, the tourist in the experimental mode does not have any relation to the center of his own society anymore. He participates in the new society but never fully converts to it.

In the final mode, the existential mode, the tourist's center is completely situated in the new society. He commits entirely to a new, elected center and will try to become a native in this new culture. As a result, tourists falling into this category sometimes live in two worlds- the world they come from and the world they selected and chose as their new center.

In other cases there are people who have more than one center. They might still belong to their origin of culture but at the same time they also found a center somewhere else in the world. Or they just value several societies and feel at home in both.

#### *Discourses and representations: Media*

In the context of representation and media the concept 'discourses' is worth mentioning. Textual sources such as guidebooks tend to be seen as accurate; however, the authors build upon existing discourses and present them to readers as if they were objective facts (Nelson, 2012). Discourses about regions and places influence the construction of places in terms of how destinations are seen and are therefore an incredibly powerful tool (Nelson, 2012, Ong, forthcoming). Nevertheless, texts should not be regarded as only representing discourses, they are "dynamic agents that have the power to shape, alter, and reify meanings associated with

places” (Nelson, 2012, p. 2). They represent destinations and locals as signifiers of the ‘Other’ which can then be consumed by tourists (Hall & Tucker, 2004). Consequently, destinations do depend to a certain degree on the dominant discourse in relation to themselves (Nelson, 2012). For India, this means that an overemphasis of the safety and infrastructure issues can cause its image a lot of harm despite its exotic ‘otherness’, oriental charm and diverse landscape.

There are two types of discourse analysis. Firstly, the sociological approach which focuses on power relations and secondly the textual and linguistic approach (Ong, forthcoming). The first approach is popular in tourism studies since tourism is surrounded by power-related issues. It views discourses as “any ‘talk and text’ that frames and shapes and/or is resultant of our aspirations, intentions, reflections and actions” (p.1). The second approach focuses on linguistic features which are used in tourism magazines, websites etc. and is interested in how these textual properties produce various issues (Ong, forthcoming).

#### *Discourses and representations: Orientalism*

When the British and the French encountered the Arab ‘Near and Far East’ in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, they faced ‘the Orient’ or the ‘Other’ with all its intensity and complexity (Said, 2003). What they shared, however, was “not only land or profit or rule; it was the kind of intellectual power [Said has] been calling Orientalism” (Said, 2003, p. 41). At that time Orientalism referred to the works of orientalists dealing with languages and literatures of the Orient including India and even the whole of Asia (Said, 2003). It also comprised specific features and styles associated with the ‘east’, as projected from the West (Said, 2003).

It was by the period of de-colonisation after the end of the war, that the concept became heavily charged (Said, 2003). Said now opined that Orientalism was about the Western world restructuring, dominating and having power over the Orient (Said, 2003). Even the “Middle East” and “Far East” are Western constructs which stress differences (Said, 2003). Macafie (2000) defined the whole dimension of Orientalism as:

*“a corporate institution, designed for dealing with the orient, a partial view of Islam, an instrument of Western imperialism, a style of thought, based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between orient and occident, and even an ideology, justifying and accounting for the subjugation of blacks, Palestinian Arabs, women and many other supposedly deprived groups and people” (Macafie, 2000, p.2)*

Ever since, this concept has been heavily debated since orientalist representations “are never merely mirrors held up to somehow reflect or represent the world but instead enter directly into its constitution (and destruction). Images and words release enormous power, and their dissemination [...] can have the most acutely material consequences” (Gregory & Pred, 2007, p.2).

In relation to Orientalism Said came up with the concept of imaginative geographies by which a certain vocabulary, discourses or figures create a certain perceived image of a space (Power, 2009). These imaginative geographies thereby frame the ‘other’ as compared to ‘the same’ (the familiar space) and construct a geographical space away from a physical territory which gives the user of imaginative geographies a certain kind of power (Power, 2009).

In post-modernist times, Orientalism, as a general discourse of representation, still remains its conventional role of “caricaturing and ideologically silencing the civilizations of Asia” (Sardar, 1999, p.108). This can be seen in computer games or films which present the classical and romantic notion of the Orient (Sardar, 1999). Yet, this representation is always reinvested and taken in other directions depending on the style of the medium or the message that it is supposed to deliver (Sardar, 1999).

#### *Discourses and representations: Post-colonialism and tourism in India*

During colonial occupation in India the British intended to transform what they called backward culture and morals of the Indians and rearrange and adapt it to their own taste and intellect (Sardar, 1999). While the British created many things in India (roads, legal systems etc.) some

postcolonial thinkers also argue that the British created Hinduism as a religion there to again create distinction between the own familiar religion (Christianity) and the religious 'Other' (Balagangadhara & Keppens, 2009). Some are not in favor of this theory and argue that "such stories indeed deprive the colonial subjects of their agency in the name of giving it back to them" (Balagangadhara & Keppens, 2009, p.63).

Due to India's colonial relationship with Britain, tourism to the country gained popularity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bogart & Chaudhary, 2012). For touristic and economic purposes the British helped building tourism infrastructure like train stations (Bogart & Chaudhary, 2012). By 1880 the British tour operator Thomas Cook possessed a "virtual monopoly of all international tourism" (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005, p.164) to India. However, the colonial government did not fully recognize the tourism potential until around 1945 and after its independence, India's government established the country's first body to promote tourism in 1948 (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005).

Tourism reinforces and is also embedded in postcolonial relationships (Hall & Tucker, 2004). Ex-colonies like India are increasingly popular as favored tourist destinations, however power over these destinations is still exercised and their development controlled, leading to a kind of imperial oppression which can still be observed nowadays (Hall & Tucker, 2004). Hall and Tucker (2004) actually argue that the main feature of imperial oppression is control over language and text which is also reflected in tourism advertisement texts. Post-colonialism implies methods of discourse which help to preserve the traditional for the tourist and to keep it distinct from the tourist's identity (Hall & Tucker, 2004).

In tourism marketing, oriental females are often portrayed as "sensual, sexually available and subservient" (Ravi, 2011, p.220) which continues to be a Western representation since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas the oriental 'Other' comprises other ethnicities and races of the 'East' projected by the 'West', the 'Other' can also be attributed to gender, which is usually feminized (Aitchison, 2001). If that is the case, it is often done in the interest of males who relate

otherness to females and thus represent oriental women as abnormal or inferior (Aitchison, 2001).

Indeed the tourism industry continues to engage with colonial discourses of exoticism ('tropical paradise') of places and people in general and thereby recreates the socio-cultural notion of cultural tourism (Cohen, 1973). Indeed, concepts such as gender, class, ethnicity and race become a ground for internal colonialism in which identities are constrained and oppressed and selectively represented (Hall & Tucker, 2004).

Indian railways tourism in colonial times is a suitable example for that, also when looking at the history of the DHR, it can be seen that the train helped to bring the tropical, Indian and temperate, European world closer (Baker, 2013). At that time narratives and discourses have led to the perception of many European tourists that the Indian climate was too hot and uncomfortable and that their safety was threatened by poisonous animals, diseases, cyclones and floodings (Baker, 2013). Conversely driving up to cooler, Himalayan hills in the DHR gave tourists comfort and perceived safety, engaging among other Europeans in a familiar space (Baker, 2013). Hence their world was not as far away from the foreign, Indian world.

### Contribution to literature

After reviewing the existing literature, it can be said that each of the literature review topics has been more or less been researched. However, the link between many subjects has not been brought together in a coherent manner. Adding to that, there is no research to be found on how railway travelers in India experience the journey and what is important to them, hence what do they write about in blogs after the journey and what does that imply? How different are these experiences represented in the film and travel blogs? How do railway passengers experience 'the other'? This research will relate many of the reviewed topics in carrying out a film and blog thematic analysis in the main part. Here, the contents of *the Darjeeling Limited* and the travel blogs will be analyzed with the background knowledge and concepts reviewed in the literature

review, helping to understand the differences between the cinematic representation and travel blogs.

### Conceptual framework

In Fig. 1 (see below) the conceptual framework is presented. The central idea of the research is that analyzing the reel and real life connections and differences help in understanding the implications of rail tourism.

Prevailing discourses which are to be found in e.g. tourist guides influence the way in which India as a destination is perceived by tourists (Nelson, 2012). These perceptions are both laid out in *the Darjeeling Limited* and the travel blogs. When consuming these media representations, discourses are adapted and enforced by readers and viewers. By comparing the two representations, similarities and differences will be filtered out and related to different concepts and theories discussed in the literature review. With these ideas in mind, the actual act of travelling through India by train, will be perceived in a certain way, either confirming the tourist's former understanding, or challenging it. Consequently, the tourist forms his own, individual ideas and images about the destinations, which will eventually in return influence discourses about the destination.

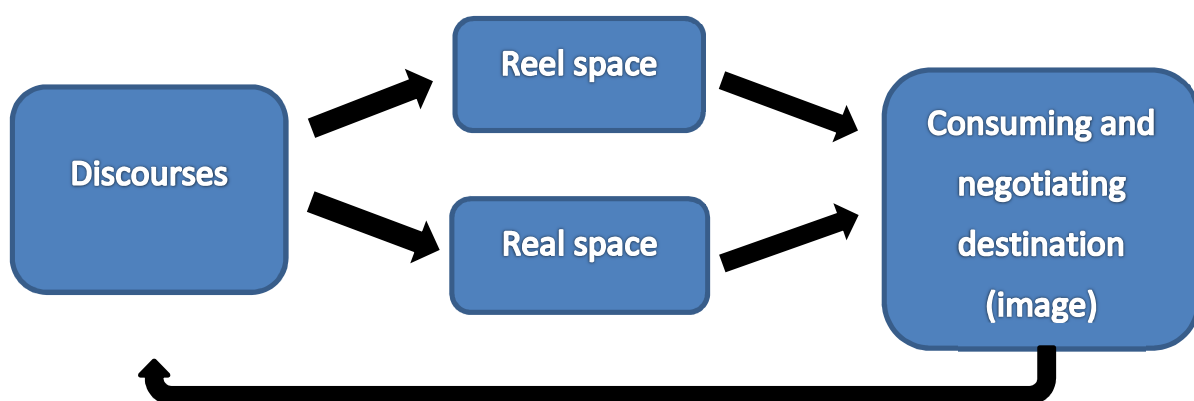


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### *General perspective*

The underlying view of the paper is social constructionist, which proposes that “knowledge is sustained by social processes and that knowledge and social action go together” (Young and Collin, 2004, p.376) and that language is the most important compound for constructing reality. Particular members in social settings (blogs and film) were investigated since they are responsible for constructing their own versions of reality out of a variety of possible renditions (Bryman, 2008).

### *Research design*

In order to answer the formulated research questions, the researcher carried out qualitative research and thereby focused on capturing and analysing meanings and constructions enhanced by words (Bryman, 2008).

Virtual fieldwork was carried out, namely analysing social interactions within cyberspaces, which are in contrast to material spaces, spaces created interconnected networks of information technology (Wittel, 2000). These spaces were executed and primary data was collected from travel blogs and secondary data from *the Darjeeling Limited* movie. These two sources were chosen since they differ in terms of how they represent Indian Railway tourism:

- In general films are contested representations of other people, cultures and settings and oftentimes stereotype the ‘other’ (Huisman, 2011, Law, Bunnell & Ong, 2007). Wes Anderson’s *the Darjeeling Limited* is a Hollywood production and therefore the ‘other’ is represented from an American point of view. Although it is fictional, the filmic spaces are made up of certain projected images of India and its railway sector and help us understanding the themes involved in Hollywood Othering of Indian cultures.
- In travel blogs, tourists have the opportunity a space to write about their personal experiences. Travel blogs can be useful marketing tools, framing potential tourists’ destination images and build networks of common interests (Ong & du Cros, 2012,

Wang, 2012). Whereas producers from the film are aware of its public presentation and possible researchers' analysis and critiques, the advantage of travel blogs lies in "its ability to reveal insights unaltered by the researcher's presence" (Ong & du Cros, 2012, p. 742). Therefore, blogs arguably provide a more authentic picture of the blogger (tourist), his or her feelings, thoughts and reactions (Volo, 2010). However, there are two sorts of blogs to be found: the ones that were just described which are actually set up by tourists and the ones that pursue marketing interests and want to attract tourists.

#### *Data collection*

Purposive sampling was applied for both the film and blog data. This means that the researcher chose data samples in a strategic way in that the data are relevant to the research question (Bryman, 2008).

After watching *the Darjeeling Limited* hitherto to get a general overview, the researcher then thoroughly watched *the Darjeeling Limited* another time for the analysis. At this point, the film's dialogues were treated as texts that can be read. The researcher wrote down important dialogues, took screenshots of essential situations in the film and also took field notes of different settings. Photographs/Screenshots can be seen as data in their own right by becoming part of the researcher's field notes (Bryman, 2008). These screenshots show landscapes which can themselves be seen as cultural images or symbols, transformed by men. By analysing these landscapes, cultural meanings and representations were uncovered (Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988).

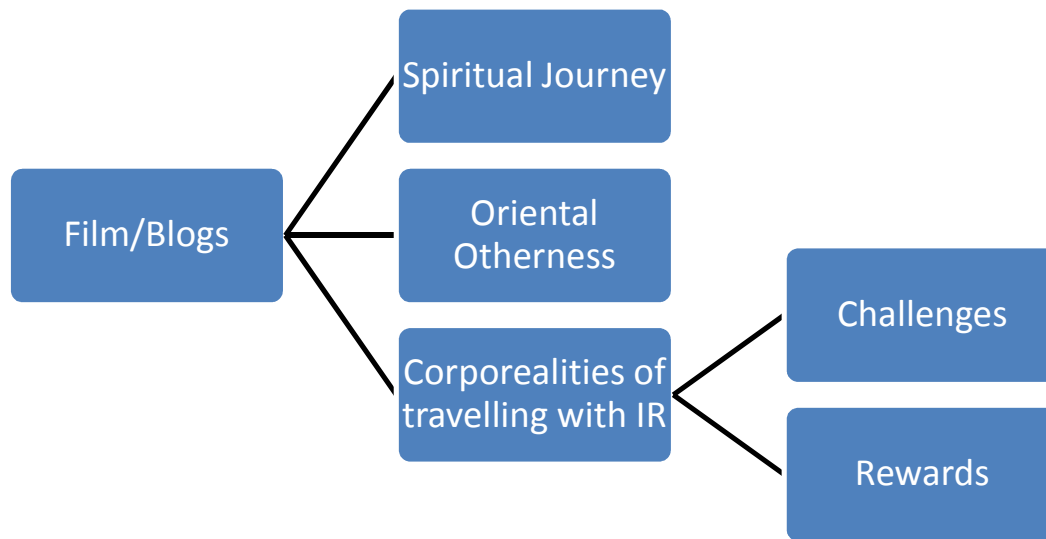
The data collection from travel blogs was done in the second half of May 2014. The sampling approach was to search different blog search engines such as [travelblog.org](http://travelblog.org), [blogsopt.nl](http://blogsopt.nl) and [blogsearch.google.com](http://blogsearch.google.com) and within these sites to select certain blogs or just single pages or paragraphs of interest. The keywords typed in were *Indian Railways*. The main criteria for choosing a blog or an entry were that they offered an insight into the railway experience in the form of either a narrative, a blog entry or a comment.



### *Data analysis*

Both, the film and travel blogs were analysed by carrying out textual and linguistic discourse analysis which gave the researcher the opportunity “to focus on the text itself and to thus attend to the specific and often contradictory ways in which an identity, experience, event or so forth is variously constituted in text” (Malson et al., 2011, p.27). The first procedure involved coding to determine content categories of what experiences the bloggers chose to blog about and what categories are important to the cinematic characters’ experiences. With this technique themes were pointed out to determine the actions behind the blogging/cinematic representation. In the next coding layer attention was paid to rhetorical and linguistic techniques and how self-presentation took place by checking e.g. the choice and meaning of words, sentence constructions etc.. Some quotes which clearly demonstrated a theme were included in the findings. In the end the analysis helps to show how different objects and identities are discursively constituted and demonstrate the relationship between the constructions and their cultural contexts.

Fig. 2 shows the coding tree with the three main codes that were chosen. While coding the film and blogs the main themes “spiritual journey”, “oriental otherness” and “corporealities of travelling with IR” could be identified. These three themes are interconnected in various ways. “Corporealities of travelling with IR” is about the challenges and rewards that tourists experience while travelling with IR- it is more about practical tourist information and was mainly represented in blogs. The theme “oriental otherness”, which was equally to be found in blogs and the film, relates to “corporealities of travelling with IR” because it is another, parallel dimension of experiencing the country. “Corporealities of travelling with IR” is about travel realities but “oriental otherness” describes the social, disembodied side of the trip, engaging with the ‘other’ and how the other is represented. Finally, “spiritual journey” was mainly a theme of the film and deals with another, religious side of the journey and hence complements the other themes to provide a more holistic view of the whole travel experience.



**Figure 2: Coding tree of main themes**

### *Limitations*

Purposive sampling, which was applied in this research, is a non-probability sampling method which does not allow for generalization and the degree to which a small-scale study can be replicated is in general questionable (Bryman, 2008). Confirmability cannot be assured since the researcher brings in her own conceptions and pre-knowledge which is also formed by carrying out a literature review which influences the coding process (Bryman, 2008). The sample of bloggers for this research was distributed over different railway segments within IR and also over different destinations in India. For future research it would be useful to focus on a specific railway segment or destination to deepen research insights and suggest more specific and suitable implications.

## Chapter 4: Analysis & discussion: Corporealities of travelling with IR

This chapter presents the physical side which tourists experience when doing railway tourism in India. It was a central theme for bloggers to write about both, negative aspects and positive aspects they had to deal with. In *the Darjeeling Limited* experiencing corporealities was not of central focus but they also emerged in certain situations. In the following the challenges and rewards in both the reel and real representation will be analyzed, compared and emerging implications will be discussed.

### Challenges experienced by bloggers

Some of the issues Chaudhary (1996) already listed about why tourists are reluctant to visit India can also be identified as challenges for tourists taking the IR as a mode of transportation when travelling through India. When reading the blogs, further problematic encounters could be identified. Bloggers report about different challenges they had to meet, some were perceived as disturbing, others only as slightly annoying. One blogger introduced her blog by stating:

However, let's begin the analysis by the *seemingly* rosy picture (Ambitious World, 2013).

The adverb “seemingly” already gives the reader an idea about the critical attitude Ambitious World holds towards travelling by IR. She then adds:

I'm closely attached to the issue as I happen to be frequent traveller (read sufferer) (Ambitious World, 2013).

Here she compares the customer, the traveler, to a sufferer implying bad experiences made with IR which she will later on list.

Arida prepares the reader of what is yet to come by stating:

Many dilemmas, sights and sounds will surprise you as you travel the trains in India (Arida, 2011).

### *Hygiene, crowdedness and privacy*

Hygienic concerns were a major concern for bloggers travelling by train (Chaudhary, 1996). Blogger Arida (2011) headlines her blog “Staying Sane on a Sleeper Train | An India Travel Experience”, thereby deploying and stressing the connection between driving with IR and possible diseases awaiting the traveler. Mani the Paradiddle’s (2014) blog heading is even more drastic: “Surviving the Indian Railways - CLOSE SHAVE ON THE SUPERFAST EXPRESS”. Choosing the hyperbole of “surviving” for a strong rhetorical effect shows how challenging it is for this traveler to use the bathroom facilities of the train even though in this instance this statement reflects some humor as well. At the same time the word “surviving” evokes negative connotations in people’s minds and can deter others from wanting to live through the same experience. Especially the bathroom facilities are a big concern for the tourists, describing their conditions as “jammed”, “unsavory”, “squat toilets”, “to be questioned”, “basic to say the least”. According to blogger Mani the Paradiddle (2014) you can even find a “dead cockroach that has assumed an advanced *hatha yoga* posture next to the faucet” in the bathroom. This sentence connects the unhygienic conditions to dead insects and links this with the use irony to *hatha yoga*, which is an ancient Hindi physical and meditation exercise. Apart from that, for some bloggers the local food was considered unhygienic because of the way and conditions in which it has been prepared, cooked and served. For blogger Iammattdorran (2013) the food served on IR is not what he calls “normal” food, which “you’d normally take aboard a train i.e. there’ll be no sandwiches, salads, sushi etc”.

Many bloggers experienced a ‘sensory overload’ when they were at the train stations or inside the trains. This was mostly due to the number of people being in one place or room and also because of the large number of luggage they had brought with them. Tourists found this “uncomfortable” and used hyperboles when talking about this subject (“some people carrying truckloads of luggage” (Ambitious World, 2013), “there may be more luggage than luggage space” (Arida, 2011)) demonstrating their un-satisfaction. Blogger Ambitious World (2013) used

a metaphor to influence how the reader will think about the topic and to give him a visual imagery: “The luggage almost floods the compartment”.

However, this experience was not shared by all bloggers since not all compartments were that cramped or other travelers did not mind this because they took it as part of the experience. Nevertheless, blogger lammattdorán (2013) writes one must be prepared to have people sleeping on the floors and aisles. Along with the crowdedness comes a lack of privacy. This is experienced both physically through the crowdedness but also by getting asked personal questions by the locals. This is perceived negative by most bloggers, described e.g. as “annoying” and “uncomfortable”.

### *Heat*

The heat was one factor which was troublesome to bloggers and was expressed by using negative adjectives or hyperboles:

If it is **blisteringly** hot then 2<sup>nd</sup> class A/C sleeper carriage is the best way to travel (Arida, 2011).

The **extreme** heat aside, it was a good experience (dproyer, 2007).

To save money I rode in the sleeper class, which has no air conditioning. This turned out to be a **bad choice**, considering the majority of the trip was through the deserts of Rajasthan and the temperature in the train had to be **at least 100 degrees** (dproyer, 2007).

Dude if you are going somewhere, Get an AC ticket or else .. **ppl will crush** you .. LOL ... (Carnage, 2008).

Try to get the 3rd AC tickets for your next train ride or you will get **fried** (Selvan, 2007).

### *Travelling alone as a woman*

Travelling alone as a woman was a particular topic female bloggers reported about. They write about being stared at by local men and getting asked many questions. Blogger Arida (2011)

writes that the staring was not “menacing” but “quite annoying”. Other than that, no female blogger reported about actual threats they experienced as a single traveler. Arida (2011) made sense of the staring by suggesting that some local men might not ever have seen white women before:

There was a guy staring at me on one train journey, intensely, as if I was so alien he’d never seen anything like it before in his life. Perhaps he was from a far flung village and was not used to train travel or tourists and un-chaperoned females? I hid behind my book and then went to sleep for an interval and when I awoke he was still staring. You do wonder what could be so fascinating (Arida, 2011).

Blogger Candace (2013) advises single female travelers to stay inside at night, sleep in the upper berths and sometimes use “white lies” to stay safe. She and other bloggers advise to use common sense and to trust own instincts when it comes to travelling alone, but also in general when travelling through the country.

### *Safety*

Rated the number one important attractor in Asia Pacific (Newton, 2005, Enright & Newton, 2005), safety is also a frequently mentioned concern for tourists travelling with IR. The bloggers have already overcome their primary safety concerns by deciding and actually travelling through Asia, more precisely India. Still, many bloggers advise fellow travelers to exercise caution while on the train. Stories are told about thieves who board the open train and steal your luggage. Also in non-AC compartments no objects should be left near the window because they might be stolen through the window. Valuables should be kept on the person and luggage be locked. Again, it is advised to sleep on the top berth because then “you’re out of reach of wandering hands” (Brennan, 2013). None of the bloggers did, however, write about any robbery or safety problem they have been involved in themselves.

### *Child labor*

In line with the research findings of Mondal et al. (2012), bloggers also report about child labor issues on the trains and stations. The bloggers show emotional and outraged reactions when it comes to this topic:

[Food] being served by children many a times and being bought by children most of the times.

Result- bad health.

Check? No, none by system!

Reason: Employment for people

Justified- NO!

Next what you see is something that deserves real thought. Little children enter with their face all decorated, who perform some acts which are dangerous, difficult and negative for their development yet they perform them for money and people enjoy, appreciate and donate money for.

Result - poor children spending time in such acts rather than studying (and then we talk of development of nation (Ambitious World, 2013).

Busy Indian stations can be quite a culture shock for first timers on an India trip. It's distressing to see vulnerable kids miraculously surviving and looking after each other at the train stations across India (Arida, 2011).

Ambitious World (2013) actually criticizes the government for allowing child labor instead of offering them educational support, and is troubled about the developmental consequences for child workers. Arida (2011), on the other hand, is more concerned with how witnessing child labor makes the tourists themselves feel about India as a travel destination.

### *Train operations and conditions*

Because of the sheer size of the IR network, complications and delays arise frequently in the railway network (Ghosh, Banerjee & Ganguly, 2012). This was also negatively perceived by two bloggers:

Indian Train network is so damn complicated .. its hard to understand and harder to get along .. (Carnage, 2008).

The true reality check might even start before you enter the train, when you are only left waiting for a train scheduled to leave at a particular time but even the sight of train is a distant hope leave apart the question of it departing at the right time (Ambitious World, 2013).

Ambitious World (2013) and Iammattdorán (2013) directly compare the IR system to European and North-American railway systems using adjectives such as “modern” and “easy” to attribute the Western system while describing the IR system negatively and to make the distinction between these two systems more clear, and demonstrate their prevalence for their own, Western system:

A huge blot on the image and a question of how many years are we running behind the modern system of railways? (Ambitious World, 2013)

Some stations have a clear digital information board that displays all departures and the corresponding platforms just like at a western station or at an airport. This is easy. However, some stations will have no such information and you'll be scratching your head wondering where your train is leaving from. It's often the case that the platform isn't known until the last minute. It can be difficult to get help as there's usually no one around on the platforms to help you and the queues at the ticket / information offices will likely be very long (Iammattdorán, 2013).

The class system with 8 different classes confuses many first-time travelers as well. Bloggers describe the class system as “awkward” or “puzzling”.

### Challenges experienced in the film

While the everyday challenges reported by bloggers occupy their journeys at times, the Whitman brothers in *the Darjeeling Limited* do mostly not deal with these issues. Except in one scene in which Francis' shoe is robbed by a child shoe cleaner:



Francis: Well now he can pay for this whole building, those were 3000 dollar loafers.

Jack: Yeah, but he only got one of them.

Francis: Yeah, but that's... we're in an emergency here. I got my face smashed in, Jack's heart's been ripped to shreds and Rubby is having a child. (Anderson, 2007)

Aside from the fact that he, Jack or Peter do not mind supporting child labor by getting their shoes cleaned, Francis also compares the cost of his shoe to an Indian building, equalizing them in terms of monetary value, stressing the difference between his wealth and the poverty of the country. He has not tried to adapt in any way to the local environment and now feels the consequences. This incident triggers an emotional outbreak he refers to as an "emergency", which was by bloggers sometimes described as a culture shock, even though all problems he then lists have not evolved or been caused during their journey through India .

Crowdedness, which is overwhelming according to bloggers, can also be witnessed in the film. But since the brothers are first class travelers, they do not have to deal with this challenge for the most part. One of the first scenes demonstrates how the brothers are not confronted with challenges experienced by bloggers: Peter walks through what could be described as unreserved 2 compartments (3<sup>rd</sup> class) filled with passengers and all kinds of luggage and other objects. He merely walks through the aisle ignoring the people staring at him and directly heads straight for his 1<sup>st</sup> class compartment, isolating himself from the foreign environment.

The hygiene issues bloggers often write about are not mentioned in the film. The following snapshot is taken from one scene in which Peter enters the bathroom and the sign above the toilet stating "Western style" (Fig. 3) can be seen, which bloggers have also reported about. This demonstrates how the trains are adapted to Western tourists' expectations and want to offer them some known elements to prevent them from experiencing a culture shock and having negative experiences.



Figure 3: 'Western Style' toilet for tourists (Anderson, 2007)

### Rewards of travelling with IR in blogs

While there were some challenges reported by bloggers, travelling by IR was for most of them the best transport mode to travel through the country and experience India as authentically as possible. They would talk about advantages of taking a train and use descriptive words stressing the advantages of train travel.

I really wanted to travel around India by train because I had read in a number of places that it was a great way to experience the country, and also for a mode of travel that would enable me to stretch my legs out fully, get up and walk around, and go to the loo whenever I wanted (mikeapp, 2012).

Blogger Moniba Rajesh (2010) even references to *the Darjeeling Limited* and romanticizes the railway journeys, stating it inspired all kinds of storytelling due to its uniqueness:

From Wes Anderson and Danny Boyle to Michael Palin and Paul Theroux, Indian Railways have entranced dreamers, intrigued authors and inspired filmmakers. That's because there's no other railway like them on Earth (Moniba Rajesh, 2010).

Apart from connecting travelling by train to experiencing India, Moniba Rajesh (2010) and other bloggers as well, saw the level of comfort the train offers them as an important criterion. Votolato (2007) has concluded the same in his research, i.e. tourists enjoy traveling by train because of the comfort offered and the fact that they can move around.

But best of all, you will see and learn far more about the country than you would by any other means. On overnight trains in particular it is almost de rigueur to chat to your carriage-mates – which often leads to sharing the contents of your tiffin tins or gossiping over a cup of *chai* (spiced milky tea). And a visit to India just isn't complete without at least one night during which the strident note of the locomotive horn and the hubbub of station sounds infuse your sleep (Anthony Lambert, 2009).

But unless you want a hermetically sealed visit, there is no better way of seeing Indian society in all its guises and richness than travelling by timetabled trains (Anthony Lambert, 2009).

There is nothing to match the views of India seen from a train window. I have travelled tens of thousands of miles across India by rail and enjoyed some of my most magical moments, catching fleeting vignettes of daily life (Anthony Lambert, 2009).

These extracts link travelling by train to romantic experiences using descriptive words such as “spicy”, “hubbub of station sounds”, “richness”, “magical” and “vignettes”. Anthony Lambert (2009) also addresses travelers who do not want to get into contact with locals, referring to them as having a “hermetically sealed visit” and discourages them to use the railway as a transport mode. With this he makes clear that social communication with locals in the trains is a given and the train is the best way to capture local's everyday lives.

Aeroplanes are so generic and bland. At the very most you talk to one, maybe two people, and the subject is never more than asking if you can squeeze past to get to the toilet, or polite chatter about the destination. It's restrictive and very self-contained, which is fine if you are just trying to get from A to B; but to enjoy travel for the sake of travel, train journeys are unrivalled.

On trains, particularly Indian trains, there is such a vast turnout of passengers on a single journey. You can fall asleep, wake up, and find that you have three new companions in your compartment with whom you can begin a new conversation (Nona Walia, n.d.).

Last November I read an article about India's budget airlines now connecting over 80 cities – but they still couldn't reach into the country's nooks and crannies: the tea estates of Ledo in Assam; Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of India where three oceans meet; Dwarka, the birthplace of Lord Krishna on the westernmost corner of Gujarat, or Jammu's mutinous hills in the north; but there was always a train that could inch into every single place – no matter how remote (Moniba Rajesh, 2010).

In these two instances railway tourism is compared to using airplanes as a transport mode. Here, positive experiences are ascribed to railway journeys, i.e. meeting travel companions and the convenience of trains to access remote places. In contrast to that, travelling by airplane is described with adjectives such as “generic”, “bland”, “restrictive” and “self-contained” and the advantage of no social interaction is emphasized.

In travel blogs landscapes were remarkably often described as romantic, mysterious and beautiful. Different linguistic techniques helped put emphasis on the fact that one of the major advantages of a journey with IR is the observation of beautiful landscapes. Bloggers either related landscapes to personal stories, used descriptive or emotional words to trigger the reader's imagination. Additionally, they included experiencing the `authentic` everyday lives of the local inhabitants when describing landscapes, which they enjoyed to observe. In the following are the most prominent examples of these landscape descriptions:

A train rattles over a long girder bridge; the riverbank is covered in a rainbow of clothes left to dry on the khaki earth. Machetes glint in the sun as they slice into fields of sugar cane, and armies of men load carts hauled by white oxen. Everywhere there is colour: a splash of bougainvillea; the vivid yellow of an immaculate sari (Anthony Lambert, 2009).

From a visual perspective, sitting in train doorways and watching sunsets became a nightly ritual and an unforgettable experience (Nona Walia, n.d.).

I loved the one through Bangalore and Mangalore called the Green Route because it's so lush, especially post-monsoon season. The Konkan Railway from Mumbai to Goa has the Arabian Sea on one side, the Sahyadri Mountains on the other. It goes quite slowly, so everyone gathers in the vestibule, the doors always open. The train squeezes through mango groves, tiny villages; you can look to someone's house, smell what they're cooking (Brennan, 2013).

The Window opened out partially into the middle berth, you could feel the cool breeze of the night, and sleep on your stomach, with your head in your hands, as the black night passed by with occasional twinkling lights (Puneeta Uchil, 2013).

I still remember the experience I had when I reached Kathgodam Station at 5.30 in the morning. It was dark. Sun was about the rise in those Hills and the cold wind blowing east to west ....It was one of the most beautiful experiences I have ever in my life (Parnashree Devi, 2013).

I wont prefer trains much for my travel, but the most memorable experience is when I traveled from Hyderabad to Kerala in monsoon. The entire landscapes will change once you enter kerala, green fields , backwaters, rains, coconut trees,.... one side of the track is covered with green fields,coconut tress while the other side is covered with backwaters.. and you can't experience this if you are traveling by road (Krishna Srivatsa Nimmaraju, 2013).

Visually the landscapes are described in a way tourists expect Indian landscapes to be, i.e. presenting the oriental charm and mystery (Chaudhary, 1996). Words drawing a peaceful, yet colorful picture of the surroundings romanticize the landscape and make it distinct from the tourists' usual environment. By stressing this uniqueness, potential tourists are attracted to traveling with IR and have their expectations confirmed.

#### Rewards of travelling with IR in the film

As it was the same with the challenges, in the film the physical rewards were not discussed or consciously dealt with. The brothers stay in 1<sup>st</sup> class which leaves them with satisfactory comfort and they never mention why they choose to take a train instead of e.g. a bus.

Landscape-wise *the Darjeeling Limited* has mostly not shown the astonishing landscapes which are a central theme of the blogs. The brothers are oftentimes placed on wide, dusty deserts and never in green or colorful landscapes. Anderson might have deliberately chosen these landscapes to put the emphasis on the plot, place the main characters in the center and to stress the lack of meaning in the brothers' lives. However, towards the end of the film when they visit their mother in the Himalayas, the landscape can be characterized as very peaceful, astonishing, clean and calming (see Fig. 4). This stands in contrast to the desert landscapes and expresses the successful quest of the brothers for meaning.

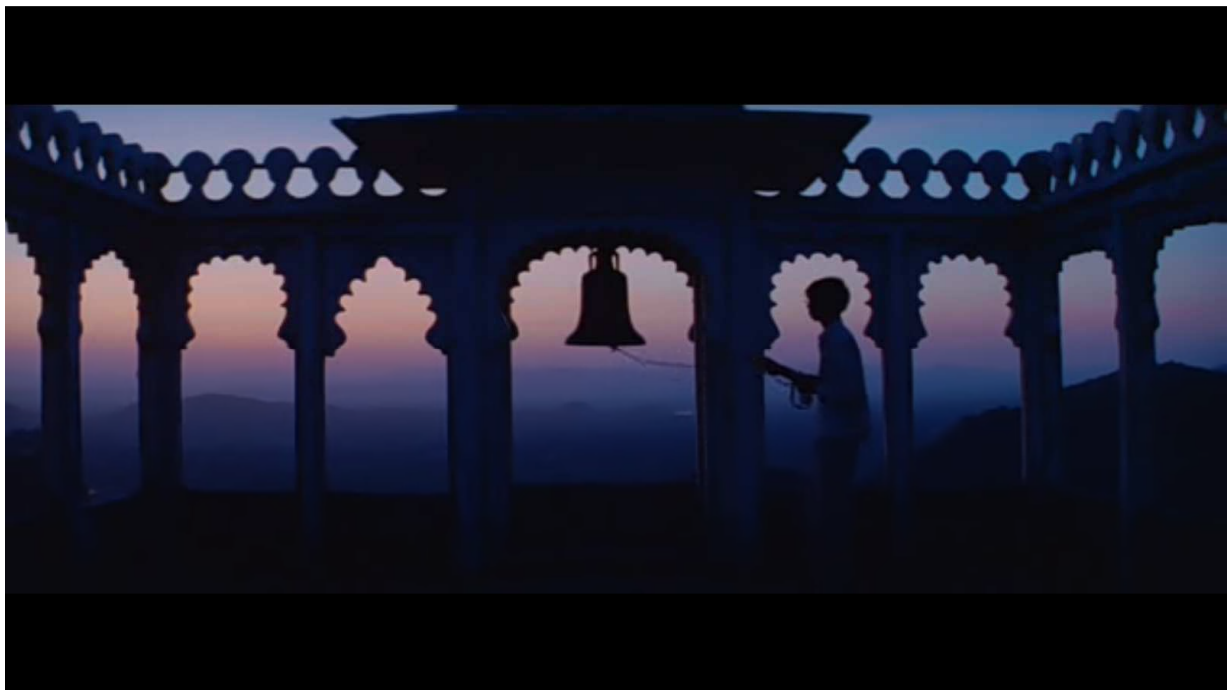


Figure 4: Picturesque Himalayan sunset (Anderson, 2007)

### Implications

While most bloggers were glad about choosing IR as a transport mode because it gave them the best insight into the Indian culture and environment, there were aspects which bothered them. As Nelson (2012) already pointed out, tourist guidebooks and other textual sources are seen as correctly representing a destination even though authors use existing discourses which help

them to represent a destination. Many bloggers are already influenced from these sources beforehand and thus are specifically paying attention to issues like hygiene and safety. The blogs show that bloggers are interested to represent the physical experiences when going on a journey with IR whereas *the Darjeeling Limited* is more concerned with philosophical special themes like spirituality and otherness (to be elaborated in the next two chapters). Bloggers write about important concerns that tourists have before going on a journey since they also travelled to that destination with similar concerns and experience the tourist realities in a certain way, shaped by what information and shaped meanings they got before the journey (Nelson, 2012). In case of India these are concerns about safety (also for food), poor accommodation and meeting people who are “unhelpful” (Chaudhary, 1996, p.618). Some measures have already been taken by IR to meet tourist expectations by e.g. offering Western-style bathrooms. Still, the underlying concerns were partly met by bloggers, although other challenges like delays, child labor and the temperature also bothered some. Whereas no blogger experienced any safety problems, which according to most is due to them using their common sense and adapt to local conditions, the film presented one robbery. This can imply that the Whitman brothers did not pay attention to the local situation and are not streetwise enough to anticipate challenges to be experienced in the foreign environment. India is caught in dominant discourses surrounding it (Nelson, 2012) and if customer satisfaction is to be improved, destination marketers should work on changing the perceived negative discourses. This can be done best by advising operators of IR and showing them results of blog analyses so they can work on some of these challenges like offering more luggage space or cleaning the facilities more frequently. Safety issues remain a concern which cannot easily be changed (Enright & Newton, 2005), but using guidelines proposed by bloggers can help to minimize dangers. An image promotion campaign, as Chaudhary (2000) suggested, could also be a useful measure to improve the destination’s image.

It could be confirmed by the travel blogs that child labor appears on IR trains and stations. Bloggers reacted negatively to this fact, but did not blame the IR for that, but rather the government. Foreign tourists travel with IR which could help in the long run to raise international awareness to this problem and eventually to tackle the problem from the legal

side (Mondal et al., 2012). Another problem that IR and its customers currently face is the high pressure on the system leading to delays and chaotic circumstances, also realized by bloggers. They did not report about any accidents which increasingly take place in the last years (Ghosh, Banerjee & Ganguly, 2012) but about the complicated and chaotic system. The whole railway infrastructure needs to be improved to prevent these consequences and improve the Indian railway image (Ghosh, Banerjee & Ganguly, 2012).

Film constantly reproduces the tourist gaze and drives peoples' desire to visit the place they anticipated (Williams, 1998). This could be observed for instance after the film *the Beach* by Alex Garland or also Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* was released (Tzanelli, 2006, Mendes, 2010). Marketing, e.g. tours, focusing on experiencing the cinematic places which were central to these two films were offered and demanded by tourists. Anderson's *the Darjeeling Limited* was not mentioned in any of the blogs except in one advertising text, so it can be concluded that the movie did not have the same influence as the ones that actually caused destination marketing. This might be because it was viewed by a comparably smaller audience. Since the film does not deal, as mentioned, with most everyday challenges, it can also shape the image of people travelling with IR in a positive way because it does not represent the typical tourist corporealities but emphasizes other themes. On the other hand, the brothers travel in 1<sup>st</sup> class, which was by bloggers not recommended for tourists who actually want to experience the country, and the train is also fictional which might give the viewers the wrong impression and false expectations. This was also the case in the *Slumdog Millionaire* tours, which were offered in places other than the actual film sets and led to disappointment from the side of the tourists because they expected to be able to gaze upon the 'authentic' cinematic landscapes (Mendes, 2010, Urry, 1990).

One main attraction, for which touristic India is also widely recognized to bloggers in visiting, was the landscape. Bloggers described the landscape with descriptive words, drawing a romantic picture of railway tourism during which these landscapes can be observed. This can be of importance for destination marketers, writing about these landscapes in marketing texts and also stressing other advantages of railway tourism. Bloggers cherished the comfort of the train,



being able to walk around and travel with other fellow travelers (Votolato, 2007). The train, compared to an airplane, gave them the ability to access remote places and capture 'everyday life' of Indian inhabitants (Hannam, Butler & Paris, 2014). These advantages of travelling with IR can be important for marketing purposes and to demonstrate the strong sides of this travelling mode. In *the Darjeeling Limited* the brothers travel as first class passengers, enjoying the comfort thereof. Since the different classes and comfort levels of IR are oftentimes mentioned and to some tourists also somewhat confusing, destination marketers could collaborate with IR managing board in simplifying this system or at least make it more transparent for foreigners what exactly is offered in which class. Research done on blogs could help to clarify what tourists expect from which class and what they lack right now or are unsatisfied with and positive aspects should be built upon.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis & discussion: Oriental Otherness**

This chapter deals with the encounter and representation of the Indian 'other'. In both, the film and the blogs, this encounter presents an essential part of the whole travel experience with IR. Differences are created between the tourist and the locals in different ways and the resulting implications will be discussed in the last section along with marketing implications and the consequences of creating a distinction between both parties.

### Film

Said's (1978) prevailing concept *Orientalism* can be recognized as a theme in *the Darjeeling Limited*. According to him "the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said, 1978, p.1). All these elements - romance, exoticism, landscapes and

haunting experiences – can be rediscovered in Anderson’s film. In many instances it seems as if he wants to operationalize Orientalism in the film and consciously sets up his three main characters to experience the Indian ‘other’ in an Orientalist way.

To examine this claim one might first look at the way the brothers are visually represented differently than the local population. Mostly, the brothers can be seen in an attire that is associated with the West, i.e. they wear suits (see Fig. 5). In contrast to that, the Indian locals can be seen wearing clothes which are traditional Indian, i.e. women wearing *saris* and men *sarongs*. Adding to that many men, also the chief steward, wear *dastars*, which are turbans worn by Sheikhs (see Fig. 6). Hence they represent faith and religious belonging which is also linked to spirituality. What also sets the two parties apart is the color of the clothing. While the suits are grey and neutral, the Indian attire is very colorful and bright. These contrasts are chosen to let the Western brothers experience the Indian locals with the notion that each of them holds different values and characteristics.



Figure 5: Whitman brothers wearing suits while visiting local market (Anderson, 2007)



Figure 6: Train steward wearing light green uniform and dastar (Anderson, 2007)

Another way to differentiate the West from the East is to linguistically create stereotypes. Stereotypes are generalizations of other cultures to express their strangeness and difference from the own familiar (Huisman, 2011). While many stereotypes and clichés the brothers hold can be identified, there are two dialogues which demonstrate literal stereotyping.

Francis: We'll get you a different present.

Peter: I don't think so.

Francis: What is that supposed to mean?

Peter: It means there's been too much Indian giving over the years. (Anderson, 2007)

Peter: He didn't really kill that snake, did he? I mean, it's gotta be against his religion or something. (Anderson, 2007)

While the first choice of words, “Indian giving”, is a racially insensitive remark, especially since the brothers currently are traveling in India and interact with its population it also enforces the belief that all Indians sooner or later will demand something they have given to someone as a gift, back. The second remark stereotypes the Hindi religion, assuming that people belonging to this religion are always peaceful and would not kill another living being. Most likely Peter raises this assumption because followers of Hindi religion believe in reincarnation, being born again in another form/body (e.g. an animal) after the current life. However, Peter is not well-informed about this process or the religion in general which is why he adds the suffix “or something” after his claim.

In terms of romance Anderson chose to include the storyline between Jack and Rita, an Indian stewardess working on the train. Rita holds many attributes connected to the sensual, mysterious oriental women. These images were mostly created through colonization and the tourism industry (Cohen, 1973). She works as a waitress, wears traditional attire, has long, dark hair and large, brown eyes. However, her character is actually modern according to Western standards and she does not act subservient or inferior to the brothers (Aitchison, 2001). While her name is already Western, she also smokes, has a boyfriend while having sex with strangers and expresses her own will and opinion. And in fact she is the one who ‘uses’ Jack for her own purposes and therefore plays the rather dominant and superior role in this relationship:

Rita: What’s wrong with you?

Jack: Let me think about that. I’ll tell you next time I see you. Thanks for using me.

Rita: You are welcome. (Anderson, 2007)

This storyline hints to the fact that Anderson wants to overcome orientalist discourses and sees the irony ‘othering’ from the Indian point of view.

Another scene supports this claim: After the Whitman brothers leave the market where they went shopping and where Peter’s shoe was robbed, they leave the center and walk along a path when some locals laugh at them from above a wall whereupon Francis says:

I love it here. These people are beautiful. (Anderson, 2007)

This claim seems bizarre since he so far did not make an effort to communicate with any locals. Plus, in the previous scene he got robbed by a local and reacted very upset about that.

Said (1978) describes Orientalism as comprising specific features and styles associated with the 'east', as projected from the West. This implies that these features are assigned to the 'other' without really having socio-cultural insights. It is as Macafie (2000) puts it only "a partial view", hence lacking the holistic image of the 'other'. This can only be overcome by really studying the other culture objectively and also integrate oneself into the strange culture and environment and witnessing authenticity (Cohen, 1979). In most part of *the Darjeeling Limited* it can be noted how little interaction between the Whitman brothers and the locals takes place. The brothers are very self-centered and do not make an effort to communicate or connect with the 'other'. They do not go beyond Cohen's (1979) second stage, the diversionary mode. Yet, this stands in contrast to what they claim: going on a spiritual journey, seeking the unknown and being completely open-minded. They have alienated themselves from what Cohen calls their 'center', i.e. from their original, North-American society. This is why they want to experience diversion from their everyday lives by going on this journey. At the same time they show no real interest in finding a new center.

The only time they connect to and are taken in by the locals is when they live in a rural village for a few days. This came about due to an incident in which three boys of the local village were drowning in a river and Francis, Peter and Jack saved two of the boys while the third one did not survive. The inhabitants showed their gratitude by accommodating the three boys and inviting them to the boy's funeral. In the funeral scene the contrast between the brothers and the locals and the issue of otherness is deliberately set aside by means of attire and music. During this scene the song *strangers* by the British rock band *the Kinks* is played. The lines "Strangers on this road we are on/ We are not two we are one" stresses the overcoming of 'otherness' between the two cultures in this scene. To even go further, one could say that this shows how people are all the same when it comes to emotional experiences like in this instance death. Regarding the attire this is the only time where the brothers adapt to the given environment

and wear the same clothes as the locals, namely white robes (see Fig. 7), signifying their momentarily union and equality with each other.



Figure 7: Whitman brothers blending in by wearing local funeral attire (Anderson, 2007)

### Blogs

In travel blogs the Indian 'other' is also an important theme. Just like in the film, interaction with locals is only seen as one part of the whole journey, but if it takes place it is of importance to the bloggers. In contrast to the film, however, throughout the whole journey interaction is equally important (whereas in the film it is most important in the funeral key scene). Among other reasons this might be the case because bloggers mostly report to have stayed in sleeper class, which is also used by locals. The brothers stay in 1<sup>st</sup> class compartments and therefore do not get in contact with locals on the train, except for the stewards. One blogger wrote about preferring sleeper class because that is where he got to experience the country best:

The experience you got in a sleeper class might have been bad due to weather or some other reasons but it also showed you one of the many aspects of India which cannot be experienced while traveling AC. :) (ayush, 2010).

Another blogger compared the tube in London to the IR and concluded that the IR is much better in terms of social interaction describing it as “lovely”, compared to describing users of the tube as “miserable” and “self-contained”. For her, taking the train is supposed to be more than just the physical act of travelling; it is about crossing social boundaries:

What do you rate better - the London tubes or the Indian trains?

If anything, Londoners could learn from Indian train travellers; they should learn how to cheer up and not look so surly and miserable all the time. The lovely bit about train travel in India is the interaction and the complete lack of social boundaries. On London tubes, everyone is so self-contained. Train is just a means of transport, not a place to interact or mingle (Nona Walia, n.d.).

As Williams (2009) already noted, stereotypes and clichés can be built in travel blogs, by linking images of a destination to ideas people already hold. In travel blogs about experiencing IR, this can also be witnessed. Ambitious World (2013) writes:

So, one obvious question here is, isn't there a limit on the baggage? the answer to which is NO and yes the mango people both suffer and enjoy the freedom of it (Ambitious World, 2013).

Sleeper yes, so my definition of normal has included the sleeper coaches because a "general compartment" well has a life of its own, which well, many of you "sophisticated" souls out there may find hard to digest (Ambitious World, 2013).

The ‘Mango people’ whom she refers to here, literally translate to ‘common man’ (K2, 2009). And the common people are in this case the Indian locals. On the other hand she calls the tourists “‘sophisticated’ souls’ and advises them to not stay in the sleeper compartments where the ‘common’ people stay. This creates a clear distinction between tourists and locals as well as attributing the tourists as well-educated and the locals as having a lack of education and no sense of Western logic since they have to deal with the crowdedness but still enjoy the non-existent luggage limit. Nevertheless her opinion of the tourists may also not be high because she

calls them 'sophisticated' in quotation marks, signifying that her comment is meant sarcastically.

Tourism and also rail tourism reinforces postcolonial relationships (Hall & Tucker, 2004). In the travel blogs of railway tourism language and texts still preserve the traditional Indian and more importantly, keep the Indian's identity distinct from the Western identity. This can be observed when bloggers mention the past British colonial occupation, e.g.:

Indian Railways is one of the biggest employers in the world and is one of the best things we gave India (Arida, 2011).

This quote demonstrates how Arida (2011) still takes pride in transforming the supposedly backward culture of India (Sardar, 1999) and how power is still exercised over the British ex-colony. By using superlatives such as "biggest" and "best" and awarding them to the own, British government, shows how for her British superiority is still prominent.

I acknowledge some bad stuff that Britain inflicted on India in the days of the Raj and they say, "yes but the Britishers gave us the trains! ..." (Arida, 2011).

This selective representation of Blogger Arida (2011) assumes that all the Indian inhabitants have either forgotten or forgiven the British for the colonizing India and accordingly its repression and are actually positive-minded about these times because they brought Western modernization, e.g. the railway system. At the same time Arida (2011) quotes one Indian and consciously adopts the grammar mistake "Britishers" instead of "Britons". By doing so Arida (2011) might want to imply that there is still inferiority and 'otherness' of Indians.

On the positive side, this post-colonial relationship can be a source for the Indian economy of earning foreign income by drawing on certain discourses (Nelson, 2012, Hall & Tucker, 2004). In blogs the reference to Agatha Christie novels is made twice in relation to colonial times when the wealthy, British travelers rode the luxury equipped train and did not want to come into contact with the 'other' because they "were appalled by poverty". One blogger said that she was surprised to find out that her journey and travel companions were not similar to that



experience though the furniture was modelled to fit that neat, elegant impression to meet tourist expectations.

Encountering and communicating personally with the 'other' was by all bloggers considered a positive experience, describing the locals with positive adjectives but also using descriptive words in order to emphasize differences. Communicating with the 'other' is seen as part of, and enriching the touristic experience:

Unfortunately, none of our 4 bunk mates spoke English. They seemed confused that we were riding sleeper class in this extreme heat. They were all pretty nice, and I think the old guy felt protective of (or sorry for) me. I know this because when a street kid came in to ask me for money (thank you white skin), the old man not only yelled at the kid, but he also took off his shoe and threatened to hit the kid with it. If that is not bunk-mate love, I don't know what is (dproyer, 2007).

In this extract the blogger sympathizes a lot with the local, regarding their relationship as "bunk-mate love". He is not completely sure though if the "old guy" protected him or pitied him but one way or the other, he felt protected by him. According to dproyer (2007) the reason for that is his own white skin, different to the skin of the locals, which apparently makes him a victim of beggars. Apart from the skin, they also differ in their language skills and thus cannot communicate by speaking, so he drew this conclusion by judging the action of the 'other'.

People are very welcoming to tourists. That's the nice thing about trains: you're with these people for an hour, two, maybe 24, and you come away with all of this local knowledge (Brennan, 2013).

I would often forget where I was, what time it was and where I was travelling to because of the nature of my companions. They shaped my journeys and made me either love them or loathe them (Nona Walia, n.d.).

Indians love to welcome foreigners into their country, so trust your gut in accepting their hospitality and learn from their kindness (Candace, 2013).

I had a really good experience interacting with local families in the train to Rajasthan (Prasad Np, 2013).

Try striking up a conversation with the people in your compartment. Most people can speak some English and will likely be very amiable, even if they seem withdrawn at first (IammattDoran, 2013).

In these extracts bloggers make use of positive words (“welcoming”, “nice”, “hospitality”, “kindness”, “good experience”, “amiable”) to describe their encounters with the locals. Blogger Brennan (2013) reveals that communication is also a way of gaining local knowledge, which in turn helps to approximate and decreases strangeness between the cultures. Blogger Nona Walia (n.d.) applies contrast (“love” vs. “loathe”), showing strong emotions like empathy or dislike towards the ‘other’. Bloggers also reported about locals sharing their food with everyone in the compartment which added to bloggers perceiving them as hospitable.

### Implications

Both, the film and the travel blogs reveal that Orientalism is still of topic in the tourism industry nowadays. India as an ex-colony is still presented as an exotic destination and therefore popular for cultural tourism (Cohen, 1973).

In terms of marketing implications it can be said that the representations of the ‘other’ can work in favor and against promotion of railway tourism in India. As Wang (2012) and Williams (1998) have proofed, travel blogs and films influence potential customers’ image and drive potential tourists’ desire to see these portrayed places. In doing so, the oriental ‘otherness’ can actually be very attractive and useful to attract tourists. While in the film there was not a lot of communication with the ‘other’, it still played an important role in a key scene to the whole travel experience of the Whitman brothers. At times Anderson’s representation of the ‘other’ were almost so exaggerated that it appeared like Anderson is making fun of these oriental clichés, still it shows how experiencing the mysterious, exotic ‘other’ remains an attraction to Westerners while he also showed in the funeral scene how important it is to actually overcome

cultural differences. In travel blogs the importance of interacting with the 'other' was considered very positive and tourists felt very welcomed which had a positive influence on their whole travel experience. Destination marketers should also note this and regularly research blogs and films representing touristic experiences to know what motivates tourists about the 'other'. Especially blogs since bloggers are normally not aware of being subjects to research and hence do not change their opinions or blogging behavior. They could as well categorize railway tourists and suggest, according to tourists' motivations to interact with the 'other', which railway class might be most appropriate for the tourists and in doing so, customer satisfaction can be increased.

While stereotyping and clichés prevail for some travelers, others actually tried to be open-minded towards the 'other' and how important this is when travelling through India:

It is impossible to stereotype a nation of one billion people, and bad experiences there will naturally be impossible to avoid. The challenge lies in refusing to accept such occurrences as the status quo, while still choosing to focus on the positive. This might sound trite or naive, but it's a choice that India demands of you (Candace, 2013).

Eventually, destination marketers need to decide whether they should keep stereotypes, which are wildly regarded to as negative and misleading, for the sheer purpose of marketing and preserving the 'other'. Otherness is essential in tourism and it is what makes a destination worthy of consumption (Hall & Tucker, 2004). Cultural stereotyping however draws along social consequences for the local people and the post-colonial relationship and power disparities will continue to reduce a whole nation to certain characteristics. It is difficult to diminish stereotypes since travel blogs themselves enforce clichés by linking the idea people already have of the Indian 'other' to new images of the destination (Williams, 2009).

Some blog entries made it clear that certain aspects of post-colonialism are still prevalent in people's minds (Hall & Tucker, 2004). Power that Britain used to hold over India as their colony has decreased, but specifically in the tourism industry it still remains by e.g. ascribing orientalist characteristics to Indian inhabitants and thereby clearly creating a distinction between Westerners and Indian people. In the film this differentiation was for instance produced by the

choice of attire, dressing the 'other' in traditional clothing and the brothers in modern suits. In the blogs this distinction was oftentimes created by linguistic choices, contrasting 'us' versus 'them', and also referring to the railway system as an advantage that the British occupation had caused.

While the post-colonial relationship and discourses create a source of income for the Indian tourism industry on the positive side, orientalism can lead to cultural commodification, hence viewing the Indian culture in economic terms and how this culture can be consumed by tourists (Shepherd, 2002). It can become a "product of political and social constructions bounded by global economic processes" (Hazbun, 2012, p.2). Representing the 'other' as a homogenous, primitive group where the tourist can find adventure and meaning in (e.g. the Whitman brothers experiencing Hindi religion as a distraction of own meaningless life), threatens the authenticity of culture by transforming what was original and authentic into an attraction to consume (Gregory & Pred, 2007). It can also be expressed in terms of Park and Wilkin's idea (2005) of how this selective representation reflects the interests of the governing's class to keep the distinction for economic purposes.

## **Chapter 6: Analysis & discussion: The Spiritual Journey**

In this chapter the dis-embodied side of the IR journey is laid out. Spiritual elements which are incorporated in the film and the travel blogs are analyzed and discussed with the concepts that were mentioned in the literature review. Finally, the implications of these findings demonstrate why it is important to discover spiritual elements in tourism and which components should be offered to individuals traveling by IR to make their search for meaning successful.

## Film

In *the Darjeeling Limited* spirituality emerges as a central theme. The three brothers go on what they call themselves a 'spiritual journey' through India. The three constructs of spiritual tourism raised by Willson, McIntosh and Zahra (2013) are in line with what the brothers seek during their journey: the search for meaning and life purpose, the life-changing moments and the connection in life:

Francis: A: I want us to become brothers again like we used to be and for us to find ourselves and bond with each other. B: I want to make this trip a spiritual journey where each of us seek the unknown, and learn about it. C: I want us to be completely open and say 'yes' to everything, even if it's shocking and painful. (Anderson, 2007)

Hence, this statement shows that the journey for Francis means more than just the physical act of travelling; he seeks spirituality though he does not clearly define what sort of spiritual element by just stating "the unknown" (Wilson & Harris, 2006). Moreover, he uses parallelism as a rhetoric device, expressing related ideas of equal importance. This means that going on a spiritual journey for him is connected to the brotherly bonding, finding themselves, and being open-minded.

The incentive for going on a spiritual journey is the meaninglessness and the alienation from the own center (Cohen, 1979, Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013). The brothers also experience this alienation which is why they want to "find themselves". The following extract demonstrates Francis' feeling of disconnection and lack of belonging. He is correct that the train being lost is a symbol for their own disorientation and an inducement to continue their search for "something":

Brandon: Apparently the train took a wrong turn at some point last night.

Jack: How far off course are we?

Brandon: Nobody knows. We haven't located us yet.

Francis: What did you just say?

Brandon: What?

Francis: What you just said. Say it again.

Brandon: We haven't located us yet.

Francis: Hah! Is that symbolic? We. Haven't. Located. Us. Yet." (Anderson, 2007)

In several scenes, the importance of Indian religious sites and practices is stressed, which according to Sharpley and Sundaram (2005), are a main tourism attractor of India. The brothers have an itinerary with different sights they “need to see”.

Francis: The temple of a thousand bulls, probably one of the most spiritual places in the world.  
(Anderson, 2007)

This “temple of a thousand bulls” is not a real-life place. Whereas the actual temple Francis refers to might exist, no actual site exists under this name. This is one of the instances which exemplify that the brothers do not take the seeking of the spiritual seriously but only superficially experience Hindi religion. Again, this can be related to Cohen’s (1979) stages of tourist experiences. While they want to “find themselves” during this spiritual journey by experiencing the “unknown”, they are actually not really searching for authenticity in another culture and a new center but rather want diversion from the fact that they are alienated from their original center. Even though they feel this alienation, they are still connected to a certain degree to their own cultural center. A scene demonstrating this is when Peter prays in a temple and ends with doing a cross over his face which stands for Christianity.

Another instance showing how the spiritual journey is not taken seriously is when they carry out a ritual to which Francis was formerly given the instructions from a guru. After each brother carries out the ritual individually, Francis points out that they had not done it the correct way. Not only does this imply that the spiritual effect of that ritual will not kick in but also how each brother is not able to deal with his problems and therefore the bonding between them cannot work.

After they leave the 'temple of 1000 bulls' another situation confirms the superficial understanding of Hindi practices and the indifference with which they treat it:

Peter: I'm going to pray at a different thing. (Anderson, 2007)

Using the vague term "thing" expresses how Peter does not even intend to study how Hindi, spiritual rituals ought to be exercised, though the fact that he wants to pray shows how he searches for meaning.

If analyzing the brothers' travel behavior in hindsight of Sharpley and Sundaram's (2005) three kinds of spiritual tourists, the Whitman brothers are a mixture between the spiritual seekers and the tourist trail followers. They are officially on a 'spiritual journey' which also guided the motivation to travel through India. However, as previously analyzed they do not fully seek spirituality, let alone practice it. And so they are also *tourist trail followers*. They follow a specific itinerary which includes important Indian sights. Formed by what they have previously seen or heard about India in the media, they now want to see these places and as Urry (1990) would argue, gaze upon them for pleasure. In contrast to them their mother, which is a nun living in an Indian monastery, is a pure spiritual seeker who has adapted to the local culture and enjoys the separateness from the outside world and the escape to the 'other' (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). While for her the destination, the monastery, is spiritual, for the brothers the whole journey is spiritual. The aim of her journey is the destination, for the brothers the journey itself is the aim.

The funeral scene, already elaborated on in terms of transcending cultural differences is also of importance to processing the death of the Whitman brothers' father. For the first time the brothers are not self-centered and oblivious to their environment when they save the local boys from drowning, whereas Peter fails to save the third one (see Fig. 8). This event changed their outlook on their father's death and enforces their bond to each other once again.



Figure 8: Bonding experience over the rescue attempt (Anderson, 2007)

Willson, McIntosh and Zahra's (2013) idea of the personal background influencing the meaning derived from/through tourism can be found in observing the way the brothers travel. They want to go on this journey for bonding with each other which they have not done since their father died. Each of them has not yet come to terms with the death of their father. The numerous suitcases they bring on the journey are a symbol for their father's death which they still carry around in the form of psychological (emotional) baggage/weight through their everyday lives. By the end of the movie, when their 'spiritual journey' is over and they have each dealt with their individual problems, they decide to leave their baggage behind and aboard the train without their suitcases and thus emotional baggage. This is a proof for the fact that their travel purpose was not some sort of spiritual enlightenment but rather an attempt to rebuild the relationships within the family. While their father's death influences them personally, their mother plays a role as well. Halfway throughout the movie Francis reveals that he contacted their mother, who is currently living as a nun in the Himalayas. He wants to visit her and convince her to come back home and deal with their problematic relationship:



Francis: She doesn't want to see us anyway. She's been disappearing all our lives. (Anderson, 2007)

The whole 'spiritual journey' is hence clearly linked to resolving issues within the family. Both are during the film treated as a parallel action while they at times also seem to meet and be interlinked with each other.

### Blogs

Compared to the film, in which spirituality is the most prominent theme, bloggers do not report about spiritual experience much.

The most memorable train journey, I made in 2002. With a free railway pass from my room-mate in college hostel, I planned to visit Shimla, but after changing so many trains, I finally arrived in Jammu. In the search of some snow-capped mountains, I randomly reached to Vaishno Devi Shrine on that trip and then life changed forever. That was the trip that realized and inspired me to backpack more and more... :-) (Avanish Kumar Maurya, 2013).

Blogger Avanish Kumar Maurya (2013) describes his journey as "life-changing", which is one of the constructs of religious experience (Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013). He also connects this indication of spirituality to a religious sight, i.e. *the Vaishno Devi Shrine* has caused his spiritual experience. Further, this experience inspires him to backpacking more, indicating that backpacking has sort of a spiritual characteristic to it.

Most bloggers did see the train journey itself as the destination and aim of their journey including experiencing 'otherness' as authentically as possible, instead of merely using the train as a transport mode to visit different destinations and tourist attractions. For them, their journey is a combination of gaining experiences during the train ride and visiting different sights. Since Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) attribute even the tourist trail follower as a person who experiences some degree of spiritual fulfillment, it can be concluded that railway tourists also gain that fulfillment, even if they did not set out on the journey in order to go on a 'spiritual journey' but to experience India and its cultural background. Despite that, all sorts of tourism

can be regarded as a 'spiritual journey' and all travel experiences are meaningful (Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013).

Even though the bloggers did not report about spiritual or religious experience directly, for many it was important to travel to destinations on the countryside, especially the Himalayas, which offer many sacred sights of Hindi and Buddhist religion and hence are of religious significance. Away from the crowdedness and hectic urban centers, they helped the travelers to relax and self-reflect.

Think of heading to places such as Dharamsala, home of the Dalai Lama and surrounded by the Himalaya; Jaisalmer, an ancient fort city in the Thar Desert; Fort Cochin, a colonial town with easy access to Kerala's peaceful backwaters; and lesser-known spots in Goa such as Colomb Bay, located between Palolem and Patnem beaches. These are all places where I found a certain calm and respite from having to be on my guard so much, and I'd even recommend starting your time in India in such locations. Although it's tempting to begin in the Golden Triangle – comprised of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur – the intense crowds there might not give you the space to adjust and adapt to India (Candace, 2013).

I didn't want to plan a rigid route. From the outset, I wanted to capture the serendipitous nature of travel. I booked a handful of trains for the first two weeks, and left the rest to chance (Nona Walia, n.d.).

But it's satisfying to see the train used by commuters and those selling their wares up and down the hillside, rather than functioning solely for camera-wielding tourists (Moniba Rajesh, 2010).

In the first extract blogger Candace (2013) lists words that are connoted with peace and tranquility ("Himalaya", "desert", "peaceful backwaters", "beaches"), then sums up that these places help her to find calmness. She then contrasts them with Delho, Agra and Jaipur, popular Indian tourist destinations, where the crowdedness might overwhelm unexperienced travelers. The next extract proofs how the journey itself is the most important part of the journey. Blogger Nona Walia (n.d.) decided to not have a strict travel itinerary so she does not consider certain destinations as travel highlights but rather the "serendipitous nature of travel". The last extract

reveals that “camera-wielding tourists”, i.e. mass tourists, are considered negative for travelers travelling by IR who want to experience India as authentically as possible.

### Implications

The ‘spiritual journey’ which the three brothers in the film set out on, is their main motivation for travelling through India. For them, this journey is, if only superficially, about finding meaning and spiritual enlightenment intertwined with social bonding and solving family problems. In travel blogs on the other hand, such deep, personal and emotional insight is not given. Due to the fact that bloggers know about the fact that their entry will be read by others, they are likely not to share highly personal opinions such as religious or spiritual beliefs. Nevertheless, they have implicated that travelling India by IR is related to visiting religious sights and contains spiritual elements where life-defining or life-changing moments are experienced. Additionally meaningful tourism can be seen as “a complex interaction of one’s lived ‘spirituality’” (Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013, p.163) which means that every blogger has experienced spirituality during his or her journey.

The fact that each person’s background influences how the tourism experience is shaped and perceived (Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013), as can be realized on each Whitman brother individually, means that there cannot be one general marketing strategy for attracting tourists that consciously search for meaning in their travel. Surely, there is demand for a broad range of different spiritual experiences, even more so nowadays where people increasingly become estranged or alienated from their own religion and culture (Cohen, 1979) and search for meanings. Since India is known as a religious tourism destination (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005), promoting it as such can help to attract tourist numbers. Thereby it is important to research what elements tourists actually seek, e.g. life-changing experiences or meditation, and highlight these in marketing texts. While special festivals or tours are already offered (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005), it is, as the blog analysis has shown, of advantage to offer religious experiences in rural areas where tourists can rest, enjoy calmness and adapt easier to the Indian

culture. Religious sights are also of importance to trigger spirituality and self-reflection and add an important element to tourists' journey.

The analysis also shows how tourism is important for people to reflect on their own lives by experiencing lives of other cultures. Even if the film characters did not converse to another religion, the journey has helped them to see their situation from a distance and resolve some of their issues. Other countries and cultures offer different viewpoints and are often, as Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) put it, attractive for their "separateness (and its utopian ideals) from the outside world" p.168). Tourism can therefore be a mean for people to search for meaning, connect to their center, but also to find a new center. Cohen's (1979) different types of tourist experiences offer insightful realizations into tourists' travel motivations and can be applied to the film characters. However, these typologies should also to be viewed critically since tourist motivations and experiencing 'otherness' is an individual case and researchers can never grasp the complexity of a tourist's experience. Therefore, it is also critical to place one tourist in one category. Adding to that, Cohen's (1979) theory also contradicts Willson, McIntosh and Zahra's (2013) opinion that every tourist experiences a level of spirituality and meaning during their journey.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

This paper has firstly outlined the importance of travel blogs and film in telling stories and how these shape tourist expectations before going on a journey and specifically affecting the tourist gaze, hence influencing what tourists search for during their journey with IR (Urry, 1990). While travel bloggers are more concerned with travel corporealities experienced during traveling through India by train, the cinematic version *the Darjeeling Limited* is more concerned with spirituality and social bonding issues. Experiencing the oriental 'other' is a central theme in both the blogs and film.

India is perceived in the public eye as unsafe in terms of security and health issues due to dominant discourses surrounding it (Nelson, 2012). Bloggers also reported about this issue and other challenges like privacy intrusion and high temperatures and perceived these challenges as negative. Therefore this research suggests for destination marketers to improve these particular concerns by carrying out research and improve standards and facilities of IR. Furthermore, handing out guidelines which were suggested by bloggers to tourists can enhance safety and customer satisfaction. Far reaching concerns like child labor should be dealt with by putting international pressure on the government and consequently IR. On the positive side, aspects which were perceived positively such as the comfort and insight into the foreign culture, travelling with IR provides, should be stressed in marketing. Travel blogs are themselves already a kind of marketing (Wang, 2012) which is, depending on the perceived experience, either positive or negative for the image of IR. Adding to that, as also the isolation of the brothers in the film demonstrates, different passenger classes on IR trains offer different experiences and degrees of coming into contact with 'otherness'. Sleeper class was favored by tourists who want to experience the 'authentic' India due to possibility of interaction with locals.

Another important theme in the film and travel blogs was the interaction with the oriental 'other'. It is considered a crucial part of the journey, enhancing meaningful travel and the whole travel experience. By most bloggers the contact with the 'other' was considered positive because of cultural connection and learning and the hospitality of Indians. The brother in the film only interacted with locals to a certain extent but it was essential to fulfill their spiritual quest for meaning. Again, it needs to be stressed that the interactions were dependent on the different passenger classes because it was reported that locals choose mostly for unreserved compartments and sleeper class while some tourists, such as the Whitman brothers, chose first class travel and thus interaction decreases. Many bloggers stayed in sleeper class where they met fellow Indian travelers. Stressing orientalist discourses is important for tourism marketing but cultural stereotyping can also be harmful and exercise power over a destination, especially since India is a British ex-colony. Several instances hinted to the fact that Britain still exercises power over India in terms of linguistic devices to stress differences between the cultures. This

can have negative effects for India's inhabitants since its culture is commodified for tourism purposes and authenticity is decreased.

As *the Darjeeling Limited* shows, India is a favored destination for religious tourism which is popular among Western tourists who have estranged themselves from their cultural and religious center. For the Whitman brothers their spiritual journey is about experiencing another religion, if only superficially, but also about solving family issues and social bonding. Bloggers did not consciously write about spirituality though they did seek spiritual elements during their travel itinerary and every act of travelling is in itself an act of personal spirituality (Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013). This demand in religious practices and sights can be, and already is to some extent, an opportunity for a tourism niche market. Since the Indian is popular to seek spirituality and meaning, IR is actually the best travel mode to reach these far-off places and experience local cultural practices. Nonetheless, the journey itself is also an attraction in itself. These railway journeys through India help tourists to find meaning in a foreign culture which helps them reflect on their own lives back home.

In interrogating the themes involved in the travel blogs dedicated to doing Indian railway tourism and *the Darjeeling Limited*, I have sought to highlight how texts and discourses created by people through modern media, can highly influence tourists in their image and expectations of a tourism destination (Nelson, 2012). Texts are contested reproductions and can exercise power over destinations, choosing to represent it only with a selection of identities and characteristics (Law, Bunnell & Ong, 2007). Discourses surrounding the underlying topic are always adapted by readers and viewers and then reinforced when these consumers bring them into text again; hence it is a circular process. India as a British ex-colony is still under influence of its former colonial image and tourists still expect to find the same elements that prevailed in colonial times. What this research also reveals is that many tourist concerns about e.g. safety issues, are oftentimes not justified, but still prevail in representations of India. India, as the 'sleeping tiger' in Asia (Chaudhary, 1996), has to offer many attractive assets and travelling by train has turned out to be the best way to experience these and the Indian inhabitants in the most authentic way possible (Hannam, Butler & Paris, 2014).

This study contributes to existing literature on rail tourism in India, connecting contemporary debates in the tourism industry and beyond, which are reflected in media surrounding railway tourism. It helps to make potential tourists aware of how India is often purposely represented with oriental features to preserve the traditional and make the destination and culture distinct from the Westerner's culture and to offer a feeling of adventure and originality for tourists (Shepherd, 2002). Said (1978) called the vocabulary, discourses and figures, which are also found in the reel and real representation, imaginative geographies. Indeed, a geographical space, in this case India, is constructed through framing the 'other' in relation to 'the same' and this gives the user of imaginative geographies a kind of power over that destination (Power, 2009). Anderson's (2007) choice to make a comedy out of orientalism shows how a change in mind is taking place to some extent in how to think of the 'other' and to break down prejudices. In this way, it addresses people to be critical towards cultural presentations and not take them for granted especially in recent times where a trend towards more sophisticated and authenticity-seeking customers is taking place (Buhalis, 2000).

Films form objects for the tourists gaze and make the tourist want to experience the places cinematically presented, as was the case after the success of *the Beach* (Tzanelli, 2006). Bollywood films, which are increasingly watched by an international audience, also drive tourists towards visiting India (Lorenzen & Täube, 2008). In the case of *the Darjeeling Limited*, as already discussed, this impact could not be observed. Yet, this research reveals how places inspire movie makers in the first place. The film is based on the *Darjeeling Himalayan Railway* (DHR) which operates since 1881 (Urban Ghosts, 2014). At colonial times, this train was popular among British tourists because it brought the foreign world closer to the own world (Baker, 2013). As was shown in this research, railway nowadays can still be seen as a mediator between different worlds and cultures. This way of travelling, with all its encounters and complexities, has inspired Anderson (2007) to make a film out of it because it is such a unique experience. If Anderson expected to stimulate people to travel with IR, remains unknown.

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