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The value of travel guidebooks in the digital age

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Abstract

Travel guidebooks are both sources of travel information and an object of consumption. In contemporary tourism, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) make information not only available, but abundant and mostly free of charge. Therefore, considering that people still buy and use them, there must be something that makes travel guidebooks a valuable object. The research sets out to find why and how guidebooks are used in contemporary tourism and how their value is perceived. Two theories are employed: information search behaviour theory and consumer value theory. The results suggest that both the uses and the value types of guidebooks are strongly connected to emerging ICTs. The reasons why people decide to use or not use guidebooks appear to be less strategic than previously thought, and they are related to the availability of a digital alternative. The ways in which guidebooks are used in the planning process are also complementary to the use of ICTs, which is explained here through the “sandwich strategy” model. The value of guidebooks appears to be perceived as an interactive, relativistic, preference experience and several types of value emerge from their use, specifically: efficiency, excellence, aesthetics, play, esteem and status value.

Key words: guidebooks, information and communication technologies (ICT), internet, tourism, value.

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The value of travel guidebooks in the digital age

"I wonder," he said to himself, "what's in a book while it's closed. Oh, I know it's full of letters printed on paper, but all the same, something must be happening, because as soon as I open it, there's a whole story with people I don't know yet and all kinds of adventures and deeds and battles. And sometimes there are storms at sea, or it takes you to strange cities and countries. All those things are somehow shut up in a book. Of course you have to read it to find out. But it's already there, that's the funny thing, I just wish I knew how it could be."

The Neverending Story

Michael Ende (1984)

1. Introduction

What is the value of travel guidebooks? Guidebooks have been one of the main information sources for tourists for a long time. Travellers buy them – or maybe they borrow them – use them and perhaps keep them once they return from their travels. In contemporary tourism, where Information and Communication Technologies (from here on “ICT”) make information not only available, but abundant and mostly free of charge, there must be something that makes travel guidebooks a valuable object, considering that people still buy them and use them. Research has shown that travel guidebooks are not only used to satisfy functional needs, although those are still predominant, but hedonic needs also play a role in their use (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Tsang, Chan, Ho, 2011). The present study will try to understand the ways in which these functional and hedonic elements are perceived by guidebook users in an age of digitalisation and in light of the pervasiveness of ICTs. In particular, it will investigate what consumer values lead people to use guidebooks.

Travelling is a value-rich activity. Leisure travel is something people engage with because they want to, not because they have to. Experiences such as a vacation trip are sought for their ability to satisfy high-order needs such as excitement, novelty, socialization and learning (Prebensen, Chen and Uysal, 2014). According to consumer value theory, value can be considered the key outcome

of consumer experience (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994) and consumer choice is a function of multiple consumption values (Sheth et al., 1991). Consumer values can not only be of a utilitarian nature, but also of a more hedonic one (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). In this sense, travellers undertake tourism activities in order to create value for themselves and others. The ways in which people value an object of common use, and the ways in which such value perceptions change in time, can tell a great deal on the society in which they are conceived. Travel guidebooks are objects that are mainly used in connection to tourism, therefore it would be impossible to study them as an object per se, regardless of their role in tourism practice.

However, travelling is also an information rich activity. In order to decide to undertake a journey, the traveller needs to gather information on where to go, how to get there and why. Even those travellers that leave their homes without a specific destination in mind, planning to go where the heart takes them, will still search for information, whether internally – by recalling their own previous knowledge – or externally – by searching for information through other sources – to begin their journey (Fodness and Murray, 1997; Gursoy and McCleary, 2004; Tan and Chen, 2012; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). In fact, some might say that the travel experience begins way before a person actually sets foot out the door. Indeed, the first contact a traveller has with their destination of choice is the representation of that destination that they might find in one information source or the other (Lew, 1992; Zillinger, 2006). Therefore, information search behaviour is an area of great interest for tourism studies as a fundamental part of tourist behaviour.

Travel guidebooks – in the most basic sense of a book designed to guide someone in their travels – have been around at least since the time of the Ancient Greeks, if not before that (Parsons, 2007). They became a popular commodity in the times of industrial capitalism and the beginning of mass tourism with the diffusion of Murray's Handbooks for Travellers and its competitor, the Baedeker guide (Koshar, 2000). For a long time, guidebooks remained one of the main sources of information for tourists, and their reliability and utilitarian value was considered higher than other sources because they were purchased and not obtained freely (Lew, 1992; Nolan, 1967). The importance of travel guidebook in the tourism experience is twofold: on one hand, they represent a source of information that the traveller chooses to use, while on the other hand they are artefacts of tourism and as such, they mediate the practice of tourism (Peel and Sørensen, 2016). Despite its importance as an artefact of tourism, guidebooks cannot be solely studied as such because they are also a source of information for travelling. Since they have a functional nature, their use needs to be contextualised within information search behaviour.

In his seminal work “The rise of the Network society”, Castells (2009) talks about an information technology revolution. He claims that at the end of the twentieth century a revolution took place, when the previously dominating “material culture” was transformed and became something new, a digital culture “by the works of a new technological paradigm organized around information technologies” (p.28). In fact, as regards the role of guidebooks as sources of information, a new type of source has emerged in the last few decades, which has the potential to replace guidebooks: the internet, together with the various media through which internet access is made possible, such as mobile phones and computers (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Iaquinto, 2011; Mascheroni, 2007). In the past few years, the use of the internet has grown quickly and significantly, and it has become a global medium for satisfying information needs, pervading both everyday life and tourism specifically (Luo, Feng and Cai, 2004). Such a radical change must have an effect on people’s values and society in general (Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2015).

Research has been conducted on the use of online sources for travel planning and information search, and it confirms that the internet provides complete, personalised, updated and free information (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006; Prestipino, Aschoff and Schwabe, 2006; Tan and Chen, 2012). While completeness might still be an advantage of the guidebook, customisation and up-to-date information necessarily lack in the print book (Iaquinto, 2011; Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006; Peel and Sørensen, 2016; Tsang, Chan, Ho, 2011). Several news sources have been reporting the struggles of the print industry in this information age, in particular the guidebooks one. In fact, sales of travel guidebooks had been decreasing steadily between 2006 and 2014. Only in 2015 and 2016, sales finally registered an increase, although modest (Financial Times, 2010; Financial Times; 2016; Publishers Weekly, 2016; The Economist, 2013; The Guardian, 2012). Considering this latter piece of news, one wonders what is it that makes travellers continue to buy and use guidebooks, when for almost 10 years it seemed that they were going to replace them with other information sources.

Considering this, the author has chosen to investigate how ICTs have impacted the use of travel guidebooks. Research shows that the main function of travel guidebooks is to find information (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Tsang, Chan, Ho, 2011). Both common experience and research show that, although information is widely available through other channels, travel guidebooks are still used. Therefore, questions arise: Why are they? Do they still represent mediators of tourist practice? To say it in the words of Peel and Sørensen (2016 p.186) “rather than asking when guidebooks will be extinct, perhaps greater insight may be given by asking why and how they are still here”. An answer to these questions might be given through consumer value theory: if information needs can really be satisfied with new ICTs and

there is no specific need to use guidebooks, then there must be some kind of value to it that goes beyond the mere satisfaction of needs. There must be something that makes them valuable in front of the digital revolution. Whether they are functional or hedonic, this research seeks to find out how such values are perceived and how they represent a part of tourism practice.

According to the theory of uses and gratification, people choose to use a certain media to find gratification and satisfy certain needs. This means that the choice of media for gathering information is not a passive one and the reader might prefer one type of media over another because of the different uses and gratifications that such media can provide (Lindgren, 2015; Ruggiero, 2000; Tan and Chen, 2012). The assertion of an active role of the user in the choice of media provides a basis to study this choice. However, a more specific understanding can be achieved by combining what is known about tourists' information search behaviour with the theory of consumer value. This way, the choice of the source of information can be contextualised within the behaviour of the traveller as a consumer. Several studies have been conducted on the needs that travel guidebooks and other sources of travel information can satisfy (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Tsang, Chan, Ho, 2011; Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998), however few studies have focused on the behaviour of the traveller as a consumer during the information search and on the underlying values that determine the consumption choices (Cho and Jang, 2008). These studies have failed to consider the information search as a consumer behaviour, neglecting the fact that information search can involve a purchase of the specific information source, especially in the case of guidebooks.

Previous research calls for a better understanding of the role of the guidebook in light of the digital revolution (Mazor-Tregerman, Mansfeld and Elyada, 2015). In the study of tourist behaviour, it is important to understand whether and how these new technologies have changed the ways in which guidebooks are valued and whether their functional value is still the predominant one. In fact, some studies suggest that the use of guidebooks is not only driven by the need to gather information in order to purchase a travel product, but it has other uses and non-functional purposes (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Tsang, Chan, Ho, 2011). With this in mind, it is not only interesting but also appropriate to investigate how the non-functional elements play a role in the use of travel guidebooks, specifically in a situation of social change where their functional value may have been strongly diminished by the advent and diffusion of new ICTs.

The present research will attempt to expand the current knowledge on guidebooks as information sources for travellers by applying the lens of value theory to a subject that has been investigated

from several other perspectives. In fact, previous research has touched upon the topic of guidebooks from several points of view, such as information search behaviour, both off-line and on-line (Fodness and Murray, 1997; Gursoy and McCleary, 2004; Ho and Liu, 2005; Iaquinto, 2012; Nishimura, King and Waryszak, 2007; Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006; Tan and Chen, 2012; Tsang, Chan, Ho, 2011; Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010, among others), identity of the traveller (Mazor-Tregerman, Mansfeld and Elyada, 2015), history of the guidebooks (Kosher, 2000; Gassan, 2005).

The qualitative method employed in this study appears especially appropriate for the exploration of consumer values. While several studies on the topic of guidebooks have been conducted with quantitative methods (Cho and Jang, 2008; Nishimura, King and Waryszak, 2007; Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998, among others) or netnography (Peel and Sørensen, 2016; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010), only few have adopted qualitative methods (Iaquinto, 2011; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006). However, much of the previous research calls for a better understanding “of the dimensions underlying information source preferences” (Fodness and Murray, 1997 p.520). In response to this, the present study will focus on one specific type of underlying dimension of guidebook use – consumer value. Such an understanding necessitates a qualitative approach in order to take into account the socially constructed meanings of the guidebook, the main influences on its use and to understand the reasons behind consumers’ behaviours (Mazor-Tregerman, Mansfeld and Elyada, 2015; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Tsang, Chan, Ho, 2011; Wong and Liu, 2011; Silverman, 2013).

As for the societal relevance of the present research, the subject of the use of travel guidebooks in the digital age invests both the tourism and the print industry. On a general level, understanding tourists’ values and how they acquire knowledge can help tourist service providers and marketers shape their value propositions. By taking into account tourists’ values, needs and behaviour, they can provide better, more customised services that can appropriately address consumers’ needs (Fodness and Murray, 1997; Gursoy and McCleary, 2004). Facing the challenges of the new information technologies requires service to quickly identify consumer needs and offer personalised, up-to-date products that can satisfy those needs (Buhalis and Law, 2008). In particular, the present study can represent a resource for those in publishing who are trying to adapt to the changes brought by the internet. Recognising the value of guidebooks could help the print industry in planning for its future and react to the challenges of digitalisation. In fact, understanding what are the values involved in the purchase of travel guidebooks might allow publishers to preserve that value in their innovations. Moreover, not only the publishers, but also

travel writers could benefit from a better understanding of their audiences (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Iaquinto, 2011; Mazor-Tregerman, Mansfeld and Elyada, 2015).

1.2 Aim and research questions

With this study the author intends to investigate the underlying reasons that lead users to choose guidebooks as sources of tourist information. More generally, this research will try to contextualise the role of guidebooks in modern digitalised society through the investigation of the value dimensions that lie at the basis of the consumer's choice of guidebooks as a source of information.

The following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: Why are guidebooks used as sources of information in the digital age?

RQ2: How are guidebooks used as sources of information?

RQ3: How is the value of guidebooks perceived in contemporary tourism practice?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided in six chapters. Following the present introduction, the literature about the field of study will be reviewed. The purpose of this chapter is to offer an overview of what is known about guidebooks, their role in tourism practice and their relationship with the information technology revolution. The literature review will be followed by a chapter on the theoretical background of the research. Two theories will constitute the framework for the analysis of the data: information search behaviour will be presented first and it will be further specified in connection to the information technology revolution by a deeper analysis on online information search behaviour. The second theory is consumer value and after a general overview of the concept of value in previous research, Holbrook's (1999) typology of consumer value will be presented. In the fourth chapter, the methods employed in the research will be presented and discussed. The presentation and analysis of the empirical data will follow in chapter 5. The data is divided in four main sections: sections one and two relate to the uses of guidebooks, while sections three and four will describe and explain the characteristics of guidebooks and how they are valued. The thesis will end with a concluding discussion of the work in chapter six, where the research questions will be answered individually. In this chapter, the contributions and limitations of the study will be discussed along with suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review: guidebooks, tourism and information technologies

The subject of travel guidebooks can be – and has been – studied from several perspectives. Firstly, the guidebook is both a source of information for travellers and an artefact of tourism in itself. Like other objects related to the practice of tourism, such as the camera, photographs or souvenirs, the guidebook can be seen as a mediator of the tourist experience (Peel and Sørensen, 2016). Moreover, the guidebook is a historical object, which can say a great deal about both the destination that it describes and the culture in which it is produced, as well as the values of society in the era when it was written.

The first books to be written that somehow resemble the modern guidebook had strategic or military purposes and their early audience were generally statesmen who aimed to conquer new lands. For example, even in the Bible an episode is recounted where, after Moses' death, Joshua ordered three men from the seven tribes to go explore and describe the land they had been promised by God. In ancient Greek culture, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* described places in detail and were considered a valid reference for Greek geography for a long time. Several different literary genres were developed, which somehow resemble guidebooks: in Greece *periegesis* and *periplo* were guides for travelling, respectively, the land and the seas. "Canons" were compiled by several authors throughout the centuries and they consisted of lists of wonders or sights that were considered magnificent. Later, Roman commanders of the army used to write *commentarii* to collect information and intelligence about the places of their military endeavours (Parsons, 2007).

According to Gassan (2005) in modern Europe the genre of travel guidebooks began with pilgrims' guides, often in the form of travel narrative. Throughout the middle ages and after, books were written by travellers of every faith who travelled to the Holy Land and Jerusalem, or who completed other spiritual trips, for example to Santiago de Compostela (Parsons, 2007). It was only in the mid-1600s that leisure tourism started gaining significance, when the first "Grand Tours" appeared, and Grand Tour guides with them, mostly for student travellers. In fact, it was typical of the humanist scholars of this period to travel in order to enrich their personal culture, in the spirit of what has been called "learned itineracy" (Parsons, 2007 p.110). The travel literary genre that humanists created was called "*ars apodemica*", which means "the art of being away from home", and which consisted of treatises on how to travel (Parsons, 2007).

The modern version the travel guidebook arose in response to new forms of consumer demands. In England, the trend of summer holidays in spas and resorts in the mid-1600s generated a body of travel literature. The earliest guides of London appeared in the 1700s. In North America, travel

writing began with the settlements but no tourist market existed until much later, and actual travel guidebooks only started to appear in the 1800s (Gassan, 2005). As a collateral effect of industrialisation and the growth of the bourgeoisie, travel became a common activity among the middle class and the modern version of the guidebook rose to popularity. Three eminent names need to be mentioned in this regard. First, Thomas Cook is generally recognised as the inventor of modern mass tourism, as he was the entrepreneur who began the practice of organised, mass tours, exploiting the new railways that had been built throughout Europe. Secondly, John Murray III, a publisher from London, began publishing a new type of guidebooks in the second half of the 1800s, focusing on “what ought to be seen” in tourist destinations instead of general descriptions and indications of what “may” be seen, like previous travel literature used to do. Thirdly, the German publisher Karl Baedeker, and after his death his son and grandsons, became an international milestone in the guidebook publishing, with a similar format to Murray’s guidebooks, which tried to be fact-focused and completely objective (Gassan, 2005; Koshar, 2000; Parsons, 2007).

2.1 Roles of the guidebook in tourism literature

According to Towner (2000), there is no universally accepted definition of the guidebook. However, it can be understood as a book that has the purpose of aiding tourists during their travel. Unlike other travel literature, guidebooks have an impersonal, systematic and detailed approach to providing information and guidance for tourists. In the various roles it plays in the practice of tourism, the travel guidebook contributes to the creation of a travel experience by addressing certain needs, values or underlying dimensions of them. According to Peel and Sørensen (2016), guidebooks are not just passively accepted by their users, but “they are met with varying levels of resistance and diverse interpretations” (p. 6). While on one hand they represent the signpost of the individualisation of the tourist experience, for some they are a symbol of superficiality in modern tourism. In this sense, guidebooks are part of the tourism discourse and they mediate tourism practice in various ways.

The first, most straightforward way in which the travel guidebook participates in the formation of a tourist experience is by aiding the tourist in the planning of their trip. Planning through a guidebook or just reading it can be a part of the travel activities. According to several studies, the main purpose of the guidebook is a functional one, which consists of guiding the tourist by providing information about the destination and contributing to the choice of the destination (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Wong and Liu, 2011; Zillinger, 2006). Most research focuses on the role of guidebooks

in influencing the choice of destination and tourist sites (Zillinger, 2006) and their ability to provide information that allow the trip to proceed more or less successfully (Iaquinto, 2011). Guidebooks are tangible objects that the tourist can refer to during their trip and thanks to this characteristic they can easily influence individual travel decisions (Wong and Liu, 2011) both before and during the trip.

Another way in which the travel guidebook mediates tourism practice is by contributing to the construction of the tourist identity. Guidebooks, seen as cultural products, allow for the investigation of the ways in which individuals create their identities through their cultural resources (Mazor-Tregerman, Mansfeld and Elyada, 2015). The use of guidebooks can participate in the formation of a tourist identity both in a positive and a negative way. For example, Iaquinto (2012) draws a positive connection between using Lonely Planet guides and a “backpacker identity”. Conversely, Nishimura, Waryszak and King (2006) found that a negative association exists between the idea of an independent tourists and the use of guidebooks. In fact, guidebook users are sometimes considered not to be independent in their travel choices in the sense that, by following directions from the guidebook, they will somehow depend from what is prescribed in it. By encouraging tourists to follow prescribed routes and activities, they prevent spontaneity (Iaquinto, 2011). On the other hand, travel guidebooks are sometimes believed to do the exact opposite: they allow for a better organisation of the trip and for choices that foster spontaneity (Bhattacharyya, 1997).

This relationship between the guidebook and the user, at the same time, also contributes to the shaping of an external identity, which goes beyond the individual traveller’s conception of their own self, but exists in the eyes of external actors. In fact, Peel and Sørensen (2016) report that what some of their subjects were afraid of was not just being less independent in their travels because using the guidebook, but it was to be seen doing so, therefore assuming that the people around them would judge them negatively if they did so. Studies found that some travellers did not want to be identified with guidebooks or did not want to be seen using or even just owning them (Nishimura Waryszak and King, 2006; Peel and Sørensen, 2016). In the “anti-tourist” discourse, not using guidebooks is one element used by travellers to distance themselves from the image of the “tourists”, who all end up doing the same things and going to the same places (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Dann, 1999; Peel and Sørensen, 2016). Paradoxically, Iaquinto (2011) found that even the writers of guidebooks themselves thought of their readers as not being particularly independent and instead saw them as unadventurous and lacking initiative.

Guidebooks can mediate tourism practice through their interaction with the places they describe – or do not describe. MacCannel (1976 p.41) identifies three elements that make a tourist attraction: a tourist, a sight and a marker, which consists of a piece of information about a sight. Guidebooks can be defined as markers, in that they identify sights, provide information about them and inform the tourist on why the sight is relevant (Lew, 1992). In his study on the effects of texts upon individuals, McGregor (2000) concludes that texts “have no intrinsic meaning independent of the process of conscious interpretation” (p.29) and it is through this process of interpretation that they become a “lens” to view the world. The author talks of “dynamic texts” in the sense that all texts have the dynamic ability to influence their readers.

Travel guidebooks are one of the traditional ways for tourists to obtain information and they represent one of the possible lenses through which a person can see the world, providing a “framework for experiencing a place” (Lew, 1992 p. 126). Dann (1996 in Iaquinto, 2011) goes as far as to claim that guidebooks are a tool of social control, because they manipulate the tourist to only see things the way they are presented in the guidebook. Therefore, for the reader, the guidebook can represent a lens through which they see the places they are visiting and actively shape their understanding of that place. Besides being a lens through which travellers see the place once they are there, they are also important in creating a “sense of place” before the trip (Nishimura Waryszak and King, 2006 p.14). Guidebooks, together with the other sources of information used, can influence the formation of a destination image, which may determine the tourist’s expectations (Wong and Liu, 2011). According to Zillinger (2006), travel guidebooks are central to the process of creating images and geographies of places because they select, frame and name destinations. By doing so they contribute to the creation of a non-topographical perception of places.

This type of agency of travel guidebooks may even lead to certain distortions of the ways in which reality is represented. Although guidebooks are generally believed to be reliable sources of information (Zillinger, 2006), it is necessary to keep in mind that they are still written by human beings, who see and construct reality in a certain way that may be constructed differently by other people. Therefore, one of their possible shortcomings is that they present information as facts and do not acknowledge they are socially constructed descriptions (Bhattacharyya, 1997 p.376). For example, this happens with the concept of authenticity in travel literature, which is often simply equated with poverty (Iaquinto, 2011), regardless of its multifaceted and complex nature.

Moreover, writers are not always entirely free to depict the reality that they see, as they are subject to pressures from their editors, who, in turn, are subject to pressures from the market (Iaquinto,

2011; Zillinger, 2007). The literature identifies several issues regarding the accuracy of the information presented in travel guidebooks. Firstly, financial constraints exert pressures on editors and writers: often, the financial strain is passed on by the publishers to the writers (Zillinger, 2007), which may result in the reliance on desktop research instead of actual travel or in writers being unable to study the place in depth and experience it thoroughly enough because they do not have the money to sustain themselves during the trip. In some cases, it may result in them accepting forms of payment (such as free meals or accommodation) which may affect their impartiality (Iaquinto, 2011; Kohnstamm, 2008). Secondly, trying to target a specific market segment can lead to a misrepresentation of places: for example, an urban environment is multifaceted and thus allows for several tourist realities to coexist. In guidebooks, different realities are selected to be represented in order to appeal to the cultural ideology of a certain market segment (Lew, 1992). On the other side of the coin, there is the issue of mainstreaming: by trying to adapt to wider audiences, for example, the Lonely Planet guides have lost the strong association they used to have with the backpacking and independent travel experience (Iaquinto, 2011). Publishers may not accept views that are not in line with the brand identity or they may censor expressions of political views when their publication would hinder the distribution or use of the guidebook in countries with unstable political situations (Iaquinto, 2011).

2.2 What the information technology revolution in tourism means for guidebook use

In 2010, an article on the Financial Times (2010), titled “The end of the guidebook?” reported that the guidebook publishing industry was suffering enormously from the competition with digital sources. This, together with the global recession and widespread doubts of credibility about travel guidebooks in general, brought to a fall in guidebooks sales figures and several attempts to digitalisation (Iaquinto, 2011; Financial Times, 2010). The article reports:

“The publishing world has been talking for years about how we are going to follow the music industry down the pan,” says Mark Ellingham, founder of the Rough Guides series, which has sold more than 30m books worldwide. “I don’t think that is going to happen tremendously quickly for publishing in general, but travel guidebooks are absolutely the front line. In travel it makes much more sense to have digital rather than traditional paper books.” (Financial Times, 2010)

In 2016, however, the same news site and the same author went back on their steps and declared that the “Travel guidebooks [have] come back from the brink” (Financial Times, 2016). Here, the author admitted that some of the forecasts he had made never came to reality (for example, augmented reality never became very popular, eBooks and apps did not replace print books

completely and roaming charges still discourage travellers from navigating the web when abroad). At the same time, according to the Nielsen BookScan's 2016 Travel Publishing Yearbook, travel guidebook sales have been rising again in the past two years (Financial Times, 2016; Publishers Weekly, 2016).

The whole tourism sector has been strongly impacted by the growth in use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and the so-called "e-Tourism" has become the norm (Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier, 2015). As the name suggests, ICTs have primarily impacted the availability of information. Certain fundamental tools of ICT can be identified that make a wide variety of choices available to the tourist and access to information easier, for example search engines, social media and smartphone applications. Through these, the internet has had a "transformational" effect in tourism (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier, 2015). According to Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier (2015), in order to understand how travellers have adapted to the internet, online travel planning serves as a window into the wider field of travellers' behaviour. They conducted a generational analysis of the use of internet for trip planning and found that 80% of all the studied generations reported using internet for trip planning and 20% rely exclusively on the internet. Such a widespread use of internet for information and trip planning must have affected the use of the analogic alternative, the guidebook.

Wang and Fesenmaier (2013) claim that the use of smartphones can significantly change the travel experience on many levels. They conclude that the use of smartphones shortens or eliminates the pre-consumption and post-consumption phase, prolonging the consumption one. According to Mascheroni (2007) backpacking practices are changing due to the use of internet and mobile phones. The sociality of backpacking is changing because both the places and the social relations in the backpacking experience are "doubling": by being connected to multiple people and places, the backpacker is both at the destination where they have face-to-face co-presence with other people and, for example, at home, where their presence is virtual. The smartphone therefore present two characteristics that make it a potential competitor of guidebooks for travel information search: firstly, it is small, handy and portable; secondly, it is multifunctional and therefore its usefulness is greater than the guidebook's.

In order to face the challenges of this digital era, tourism marketers need to "reinvent" their job by deemphasising traditional activities to focus on mobile communications (Wang, Park and Fesenmaier, 2012). While guidebooks do retain some advantages because they are less likely to break and cannot stop functioning, like digital devices can, the growth in internet use for travel-related information is also a source of concern for travel writers and publishers. The increased

independence of tourists from their products and their ability to access more in depth information due to the development of ICTs, has pushed travel publishers to increase their online presence (Iaquinto, 2011).

3. Theoretical background

An overview of the theories used in the present study will be given in the following sections. In order to answer the formulated research questions, two main theories will be presented: information search behaviour theory and consumer value theory. The first theory will be used to create a framework for the study of the use of travel guidebooks. Considering the relevance that is attributed in this study to the context of digitalisation, information search behaviour theory will also be presented with a focus on the internet. The second theory will help understand the use of travel guidebooks in terms of consumer values. An overview on the concept of consumer value will be followed by a description of Holbrook's typology of consumer value. The typology of consumer value will represent a tool to explain the concepts that emerge from the data.

3.1 How travellers choose their information sources: information search behaviour theory

In this section, previous literature on information search behaviour will be reviewed. Research has shown that the main reason why people use travel guidebooks is to satisfy functional needs for information regarding a destination, although other needs clearly exist (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Wong and Liu, 2011). Research on information search can be traced back to the 1970s, in particular with Nolan's (1976) work on the use and evaluation of travel information sources. In his study on resort and state visitors, Nolan concluded that guidebooks were in the second place in the overall rankings of travel information source use and were in the first place for credibility. According to Snepenger et al. (1990), the search for information consists of a "strategy". This approach is based on the fact that travellers prefer combining several sources of information instead of using only a single one (Fodness and Murray, 1997; Fodness and Murray, 1999; Iaquinto, 2012).

In order to understand information search behaviour, it is useful to make a distinction between the two dimensions in which it takes place: space and time. The spatial dimension consists of the sources from which information is attained. Such sources can be internal or external: internal sources are a person's previous knowledge, memories and experiences, which can be recalled to gather information about a known destination. External sources are all the other sources that

require acquisition from outside one's own mind, and they can be books, magazines, internet, brochures, TV, radio, films, advice from friends and family, word-of-mouth (from here on "WOM"), and so on (Fodness and Murray, 1997; Gursoy and McCleary, 2004). While research has not really focused on internal resources, external sources of information and their uses are the subject of much interest as to what sources are used, how they are used and why.

The temporal dimension is usually identified either in relation to the purchase decision, and therefore pre-decision and post-decision (Bieger and Laesser, 2004), or in relation to the trip, consisting of pre-trip, during trip or post-trip (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Wong and Liu, 2011; Tsang, Chan and Ho, 2011). Bieger and Laesser (2004) have investigated how information sources influence travel decisions, coming to the conclusion that this topic should be analysed according to a process approach, which is based on the assumption that information needs and behaviours change throughout the process of making a decision.

Other studies have looked into information search in relation to pre-trip, during trip and post-trip stages. Nishimura, Waryszak and King (2006), for example, have studied Japanese tourists' use of travel guidebook and found that their use is not limited to the pre-purchase search for travel information but they are also used during and even after the trip. While some authors have exclusively focused on the pre-trip use of guidebooks (Wong and Liu, 2011), others have adopted a holistic approach on the temporal dimension that took into consideration pre-, during and post-trip use of travel guidebooks and found that in the post-trip stage, guidebooks are used more than other sources (Tsang, Chan and Ho, 2011).

Information search behaviour can be influenced by several factors, either regarding the traveller or the trip characteristics. For example, Gursoy and Umbreit (2004) found that national culture of travellers is likely to influence information search behaviour. Gursoy and McCleary (2004) conclude that eight categories determine information search behaviour: previous visits, involvement, intentional learning, incidental learning, familiarity, expertise, cost of internal search, cost of external search. Other studies have found that travel related characteristics, such as the degree of freedom travellers have during their trip, strongly influence the use of travel guidebooks. The more free time and freedom of decision travellers have during their trip, the more likely they are to use travel guidebooks (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, King and Waryszak, 2007; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Tsang, Chan and Ho, 2011). Nishimura, King and Waryszak (2007) also found that travellers who were more likely to use travel guidebooks were females, flexible package tour participants or independent travellers traveling to the destination for leisure for the first time.

What presented above will constitute a framework for understanding the use of guidebooks as a source of information. In order to study the topic, in fact, it is necessary to know and keep in mind what are the possible sources of information for travellers, why and how they are used, as well as what are the reasons why people use guidebooks. In the following paragraphs, the author will attempt to offer an overview of what has been done with regards to why people need to search for information about their travels. Much of the research, as will be shown below, has focused on why information is sought at all, departing from the assumption that the search for information necessarily answers to certain needs, generally divided in the two main categories of functional and hedonic needs.

The literature alternates between various definitions of needs (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007) and sometimes shifts to other concepts, trying to discover “underlying dimensions” of needs (Tsang, Chan and Ho, 2011) or the “value structure” of information needs (Cho and Jang, 2008), which appear to overlap in many cases. According to Vogt and Fesenmaier’s (1998) expanded model, information search is not only aimed at a purchase decision and not all the information search is carried out in order to travel. The study found that information is mainly collected and used for functional reasons but other needs exist. The needs that drive information search behaviour, according to Vogt and Fesenmaier’s (1998) model (see Fig. 1 below), are the following:

Functional needs, which have a utilitarian nature and are further defined through four purposes: a) gaining *product knowledge*; b) reducing *uncertainty*; c) maximising *utility* or value; d) ensuring *efficiency*.

Hedonic needs: hedonic and experiential aspects reflect the psychological or pleasure experience in information search as a consumption behaviour. Four aspects are further specified: a) *phenomenology*, the consumption experience is a subjective state of internal cognition; b) *experiential*, the consumer is not just a rational problem solver but a pleasure seeker; c) *sensory*, information stimulation provides intrinsic gratification, arousal and emotion; d) *emotional*, consumption is not only made of a cognitive and rational component but it also consists of emotional responses such as excitement and pleasure.

Innovation needs, which means that consumers search for something that is different or novel to them. The three sub-constructs of innovation needs are: a) *novelty seeking*, in tourism, it is often connected to the search for new and adventurous experiences, which may be perceived as risky. To manage the risk, the traveller will search for information. b) *variety seeking*, the desire to find various stimuli; c) *creativity*, productive thinking or the ability to generate novel cognitive content.

Aesthetic needs. The nature of aesthetics is abstract, subjective, nonutilitarian, unique and holistic. They have two dimensions: a) *imagery*, visual objects can be valued for their expressive

qualities and not just for their functional utility; b) *fantasising*, visual objects can be appreciated through a cognitive process too, which has a fantasy component.

Sign needs, which describe the interpersonal, social, symbolic aspects of information search. A way of signifying one's status and personality type is through social interaction, which happens when communicating information to others. They are further divided into: a) *symbolic expression*, acquisition and utilisation of information, as well as the choice of source, signify a certain type of consumer and, in general, a certain status; b) *social interaction*, acquiring information can be a way to interact with others to satisfy social-based needs.

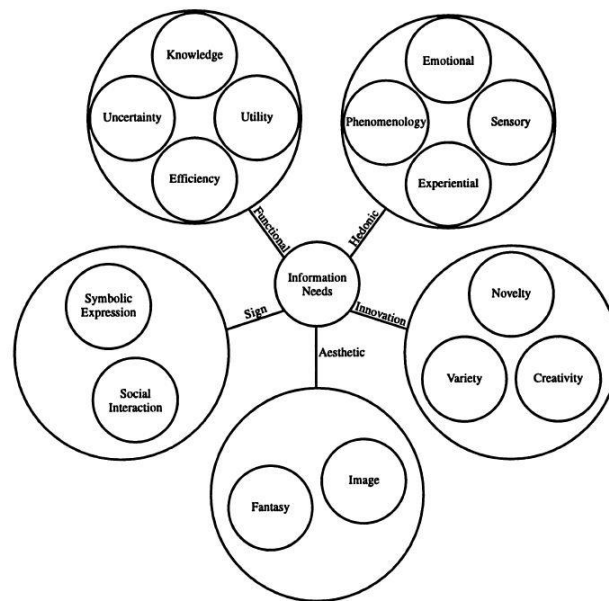


Fig. 1. Model of information needs (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998)

Nishimura, Waryszak and King (2006) have used the model in their study of Japanese tourists and found that only sign needs were not significant among their respondents. However, they confirmed that functional needs are the most important but that hedonic, aesthetic and innovation needs appeared in the results too. In a later study (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007), they revised Vogt and Fesenmaier's (1998) model and identified four additional orders of needs, alongside **functional needs** (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007 p.278): **forward-looking needs**, which are related to events that may occur during subsequent trips; **enjoyment needs**, connected with feelings of arousal and being entertained; **learning needs**, which consist of acquiring knowledge or experience about different regions, which may or may not relate to actual travel plans; **guidebook enthusiast needs**, related to heavy use or reliance on guidebooks.

Wong and Liu (2011), in their study of pre-trip use of travel guidebooks among Hong Kong residents, apply and extend the model formulated by Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998), concluding that five more needs other than the original ones can be identified, besides **functional needs** (Wong

and Liu, 2011 p.624). 1) **Itinerary improvement needs**, which mean that people will refer to the guidebook to find information they need in order to improve their travel components and plan their own itinerary. This consists of “extra” information that is not strictly necessary to successfully complete the trip. 2) **Travel partner needs**, in the sense that the guidebook should reflect the travel arrangement if more people are traveling together. 3) **Quality information needs**, consist of the need for accurate, concise, up to date and objective information. If guidebooks can provide comprehensive information about all components of travel, users will not need to use other sources. 4) **Personal interest needs**, in the sense that guidebooks should satisfy personal interests. 5) **Security needs**: the need for safety when current events at the destinations (wars, terrorism, natural disasters, and so on) create fear and uncertainties.

Tsang, Chan and Ho (2011) attempt a slightly different approach, and instead of searching for additional needs, they aim to further explain the underlying dimensions of these needs (pp.728-729). Firstly, needs are **reflective** in that travel guidebooks can be used to ponder or recollect memories of previous trips and to satisfy the need to read travel guidebooks. Needs of **security** also exist, which refer to the minimisation of risks and uncertainties and obtaining the feeling of relief. **Confirming needs** refer to the use of travel guidebooks to confirm, both technically and psychologically, the details of travel. **Destination needs** consist of the desire of knowing and discussing information about the destination before the trip. **Itinerary needs** because the guidebook can be used with the objective of acquiring concise information to arrange the itinerary effectively. Finally, also **functional needs** should be fulfilled before the trip so that it could proceed successfully and are directly linked to the practicality of guidebooks.

Another approach to the issue is adopted by Cho and Jang (2008), who investigate the value structure of information for vacation travellers. The authors assume that information on tourist products does not just answer to needs, whether functional or hedonic, but that it represents a source of value. This kind of information may not be just practical or functional, since vacation travel involves a series of leisure activities, and therefore both functional and experiential aspects of information value should be studied. Information value cannot be considered a single dimension and it cannot be grouped into two values, for example functional and experiential. The authors identify five dimensions of information value that are interrelated. The identified values are:

1. Utilitarian value: information is used to solve purchasing problems and achieve desired outcomes.

2. Risk-avoidance value: information as a strategy to handle perceived risk and justify one's choices.
3. Hedonic value: information search can elicit pleasure and excitement.
4. Sensation seeking value: generally opposed to risk-avoidance value, it consists of seeking arousal experiences that rarely happen during everyday life.
5. Social value: information may be sought through social interaction, which contributes to one's identification or self-construct.

3.1.1 How ICTs are used within tourist information search behaviour

In this section, research on information search will be analysed with a focus on the internet as a source, its uses and its impact on tourists' behaviours as well as its relationship with other sources of information. The following paragraphs are meant to clarify what is known on the ways in which travellers use the internet for travel planning and how they perceive it in comparison with other sources. While section 2.2. in the literature review explained the impact that ICTs have had on tourism in general, the following will focus on the use of ICTs within tourist information search.

Generally speaking, information and communication technologies (ICT) allow access to the internet and have revolutionised tourist information search behaviour, for example through channels such as search engines, social media and smartphone applications (Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2015). More broadly, virtual communities, phone applications, blogs, review sites, multimedia share sites are identified by the literature as the elements of what has been called "Travel 2.0" (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). ICTs have transformed the way travellers gain access to and use travel related information (Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier, 2015). Internet represents a sort of "external memory" on which people rely for everyday life (Sparrow et al., 2011 in Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier, 2015). Travel-related information is one of the most popular content areas on the internet, but online sources co-exist and compete with non-online sources for attention (Tan and Chen, 2012). In fact, research shows that tourists are "hybrid" consumers and combine several sources of information (Wind et al., 2002 in Tan and Chen, 2012).

In their generational analysis of the use of internet for trip planning, Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier (2015) found that 80% of all the studied generations reported using internet for trip planning and 20% rely exclusively on the internet. Generation Y (people born in the 1980s and 1990s) and X (people born in the 1960s and 1970s) were found to use social media much more than other groups while more senior groups were found to use travel guidebooks more. Within their study, a generation is defined as a group of people who were born in the same period and shared the same key historical or social life events (Gursoy, Mayer and Chi, 2008 in Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier,

2015). These similar experiences have an influence on these people's values and behaviours during their life. The authors identify four existing generations: the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Right now, Generation Y (people born in the 1980s and 1990s) is the one with the lowest household income and lowest spending capacity on travel among the four, but it is predicted to have the biggest spending capacity in the future. Although Generation Y has a higher adoption rate of technology in general, according to the study 80% of all the groups reported using internet for trip planning. While younger groups still seek for a variety of sources (film, documentaries, radio), almost 1/3 of Generation X and Generation Y relies only on internet for travel planning and at least 20% of all the generations does the same. Generation Y and X were found to use social media much more than other groups. In all groups, two in every 3 travellers made more than 75% of travel arrangements using the internet. Moreover, according to the research, the general level of satisfaction towards the internet increased between 2006 and 2012.

Research has found that social media play an important role in the online tourism domain, especially in trip planning, and their importance is growing. Certain social media are specific for travel information search (eg. Tripadvisor) but there is a plethora of different types of social media and smaller sites related to travel, especially blogs (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). In their study of travel blogs, Tan and Chen (2012) compared several sources of information according to five dimension: information, entertainment, social networking and credibility (divided in: believability, fairness, accuracy and depth). According to the study, in the comparison of travel books and magazines with Wikipedia, the former are preferred because they are written with tourists' needs in mind, they include detailed information about planning a trip and their content and writing style are more lively. In general, travel books and magazines are considered more informative and enjoyable than Wikipedia. However, non-commercial blogs are first in all measures, and an emphasis is put on its personal element and on the importance of WOM (specifically, electronic WOM in this case). In his study of Lonely Planet guidebooks among backpackers, Iaquinto (2012) highlighted how the internet has increased the reliance on WOM since, thanks to the internet, there is no need to be physically present in the same place in order to exchange information.

The internet is one of the most effective means of finding information, however, according to Pan and Fesenmaier (2006), since it is customisable and interactive, users can get overwhelmed by the amount of information and frustrated because they cannot find what they want. In fact, assuming that the choice of sources is determined by a trade-off between cost and benefits, the internet has a high cost in terms of cognitive effort because it consists of a complex hypertext system. The large amount of information can be accessed easily but, since it does not have a precise structure, the user is free to click whatever they want and go wherever they want in the system. Pan and

Fesenmaier (2006) propose an internet search model, comprised of three elements: the tourist, the interface and the online space. The model is represented as a network of goals and sub-goals. This reflects the hierarchical nature of the vacation planning structure on which the authors based their model. The study found that subjects generally looked for hubs of information, where several links to authoritative sites were collected. Subjects also returned to the hubs as they started a new “episode” of vacation planning (where an “episode” consists of the evaluation of alternatives and several episodes constitute a “chapter”). According to the authors, vacation planning online follows a hierarchical structure of episodes and chapters (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006).

Studies have analysed the topic of online information search from a behavioural perspective, exploring patterns and styles of information search to determine how precisely travellers search for information online (for example, Ho and Liu, 2006). Other studies have looked into what kind of information is searched online. For example, Xiang and Gretzel (2010) investigated the use of social media for specific search terms and found that “nightlife” and “restaurants” generate the most results on social media (followed, in order of frequency, by: “tourism”, “events”, “shopping”, “activities”, “accommodation”, “park”, “hotel”, “attractions”).

Luo, Feng and Cai (2004), using a consumer behaviour framework, investigated tourists’ use of internet and other information sources in relation to their demographic characteristics, situational factors, trip outcomes and destination perception. The study considers the internet an environmental factor in consumers’ behaviour according to the distinction made by Berkman and Gilson (1986, in Luo, Feng and Cai, 2004) between environmental characteristics and individual characteristics affecting consumer behaviour. The authors relate their research to Fodness and Murray’s (1999) view of search strategies as composed of three dimensions: temporal (timing of searching activity), spatial (internal/external) and operational (sources). The results show that there is a correlation between use of the internet and gender as well as household income (males with higher income use internet more) but no correlation with education level. Trip purpose as well as travel party composition also have a correlation with internet usage for travel information search but no correlation was found with the trip purpose or the experience of the travellers. These results can give an idea of the complicated relationship between information search and internet and of the correlations that do exist, although the data was collected between 1998 and 2001 and therefore it is probably not representative of travellers’ information search behaviour today.

According to Beritelli, Bieger and Laesser (2007) the internet has had an impact on information search portfolios in that it was generally used to complement other sources of information, although it had not replaced them. Virtual communities have become one of the primary

platforms for travellers to share experiences online (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Additionally, the development of an “online tourism domain” is strongly connected to the use of social media for exchanging information. Studies have found that the thoroughness of information online is equivalent to that of travel guidebooks (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006; Prestipino, Aschoff and Schwabe, 2006; Tan and Chen, 2012). Moreover, the tourist experience has been affected by the widespread use of smartphones. They have the potential to influence significantly tourist behaviours and emotional states by addressing specific needs such as information and problem solving, sharing experiences and creating memories (Wang, Park and Fesenmaier, 2012).

Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier (2015) summarised four trends that emerged from several longitudinal studies on the use of the internet for trip planning. Firstly, internet use for travel and planning is well adopted and saturated and “eTourism” seems to have already become the norm. The internet represents one of the main sources of information in trip planning, and obstacles such as lack of trust and credibility, poor usability and lack of personalised services seem to have been overcome throughout the years during which the studies have been conducted. Secondly, the internet is used by all the population regardless of age but Generation Y are much more active and engaged in travel planning, they use a variety of information and communication devices and channels online and they seek information from a variety of sources. Thirdly, social media, mobile devices and emergent channels support new behaviours. These sources are complementary to each other and they encourage users to postpone decisions. Lastly, the authors found that the search for experiences continues and therefore travel information search has increasingly changed to include experience products such as museum tickets, shopping and dining.

3.2 Why people buy what they buy: consumer value theory

As mentioned above, while it is fundamental to have a framework to understand why travellers search for information at all, such theory would not suffice to explain why they might prefer one source over the other. To understand this preferential relationship and considering that the choice of using guidebooks involves a consumer behaviour (generally a purchase), consumer value theory has been selected as an appropriate tool that might be able to make some clarity on the questions posed by the author. In fact, according to Holbrook’s (1999) definition, value is an interactive, relativistic, preference experience. This view of value is considered appropriate by the author of the present study to understand the subject at hand. Before explaining in more depth Holbrook’s concept of value, however, a general introduction to the concept will be given in the following

section. The purpose of this chapter is to understand what value is and how it has been conceived in previous literature.

While the use of guidebooks is a way to gather information about a travel destination, it also involves the consumption of a product – the book itself – by a consumer. Within the study of consumer behaviour, one of the crucial concepts that drive consumers' choices is value. Value is in fact considered the key outcome of consumer experience (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994) as well as an indicator of customer loyalty (Parasuraman and Grewal, 2000) and therefore of repurchase intention (Morar, 2013). It is fundamental to understand consumers' values to know why consumers make the choices they do and “why we buy what we buy” (Sheth et al., 1991).

The concepts of value and value creation became the centre of marketing and managerial research in the 1990s, and they have received great interest from the business world throughout the years (Sánchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Grönroos, 2012). Because of the numerous attempts to study the subject from several perspectives, many believe that “value” is one of the most misused concepts in social sciences and management literature (Khalifa, 2004). If not misused, the concept is however surrounded by a certain degree of confusion and it is understood in many ways (Grönroos, 2012; Ramirez, 1999). The confusion around this concept stems from the fact that the word value can have different meanings and can be used in different contexts. To make some clarity, a first distinction needs to be drawn between “value” and “values”. While “value” is the outcome of an evaluation, “values” refer to the standards, norms, criteria, goals or ideals that serve as the basis for the evaluation itself (Sánchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Holbrook, 1999; Woodruff, 1997).

Two streams of research have been identified that conceive value either as a unidimensional construct or as a multidimensional one (Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). The study of value can focus alternatively on the managerial or the customer's perspective. The managerial perspective is focused on creating and delivering value to customers with the aim of increasing an organisation's value. This concept is strictly linked to monetary value and otherwise economic interpretations of the concept. A customer centric perspective of value, however, is directed to the wants and needs of the customers and how they perceive value (Woodruff, 1997). Generally speaking, studies on value agree that value can be both positive and negative, no matter how it is defined (Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007).

Within the unidimensional view, value is a single concept, which may be the result of “multiple antecedents” but it is not an aggregate concept made up of several components (Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007 p.430). The utilitarian perspective is predominant in this

approach, which descends from studies on price. According to Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991 p.308), value is a “cognitive trade-off between perceptions of quality and sacrifice”. The elements of quality and sacrifice (price) are the antecedents of value as a comprehensive concept, but they are not its distinct components. Another unidimensional perspective on value is Zeithaml’s (1988), who constructs value within a means-end relationship, where consumption is a means for the customer to satisfy their needs. Here, value is defined as “what I get for what I give” (p.13). In this context, a distinction is also made between value and quality, where the former is more individualistic and personal than the latter. Moreover, value is defined as a higher-level concept than quality and thus a hierarchical relationship between these concepts is established by the author. According to Zeithaml (1988), the “get” components, or benefits, include “intrinsic attributes, extrinsic attributes, perceived quality and other relevant high level abstractions”; while the “give” or sacrifice components include “monetary and non-monetary prices” (p.14). Moreover, the author claims that perceived value – rather than quality – determines the purchase decision, in the sense that a higher quality in a product will not necessarily mean that the consumer will buy it because they might have price constraints, which will lead them to attribute a higher value to the product that falls within their budget.

Within the multidimensional view, value consists of “several interrelated attributes or dimensions that form a holistic representation of a complex phenomenon” (Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007 p.431). Woodruff (1997) defines perceived value as “a customer’s perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer’s goal and purposes in use situations” (p. 142). Here, too, value is seen in a means-end perspective, where achieving value is finalised to realising one’s goals and purposes. However, in the author’s view, the concept of value is made up of several components (attributes, attribute performances and consequences of the use of a product), it exists in relation to the customers’ end goals and purposes: whether the use of a product will facilitate or block the realisation of those goals and purposes will determine the value of the product. Woodruff (1997) constructs a “customer value hierarchy” with customers’ goals and purposes at the top, followed by desired consequences in use situations and then desired product attributes and attribute performances at the bottom (see Fig. 2 below).

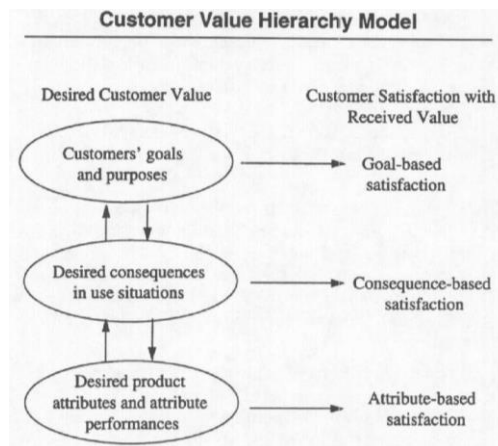


Fig. 2. Customer Value Hierarchy Model (Woodruff, 1997)

The theory presented in the above paragraphs is a historical overview of how the concept of value has been studied, mainly in marketing theory. However, such a concept relies strongly on the idea that value only exists in relation to certain goals and purposes. Therefore, another stream of research will be presented in the following paragraphs, which recognises two distinct types of value: utilitarian value and hedonic value (Babin Darden and Griffin, 1994; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). While the utilitarian aspects of consumption have traditionally been acknowledged by researchers, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) first recognised the importance of its hedonic aspects. In their 1982 paper, the authors complained the lack of attention that research dedicated to an experiential perspective of consumption, which focused more on exploring “the symbolic meanings of more subjective characteristics” of consumption (p.134). Utilitarian value consists of the outcome of the pursuit of certain intended consequences, while hedonic value is more related to spontaneous, emotional responses to the consumption activity. The former depends on whether the need that the customer was aiming to satisfy was indeed satisfied, while the latter is more subjective and personal. Therefore, this view of value, too, recognises that the consumption activity may be instrumental to the purpose of satisfying a need, but it also acknowledges that there is another fundamental component of consumption that is of an experiential nature (Babin Darden and Griffin, 1994).

As for how value performs in relation to consumption choices, according to Sheth et al. (1991), consumer choice is a function of multiple consumption values (see Fig. 3 below). These values are identified as functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional value and the purchase decision can be influenced by all or any of these values. Moreover, per the same author, these values are independent from each other, in the sense that they relate additively and do not need to be present all at once. However, the author believes that choices usually entail the willingness to accept less of one value to obtain more of the other (p.163). The dimensions of value are further

explored by Holbrook (1999) through a typology of consumer value, which will be explained in the following section.

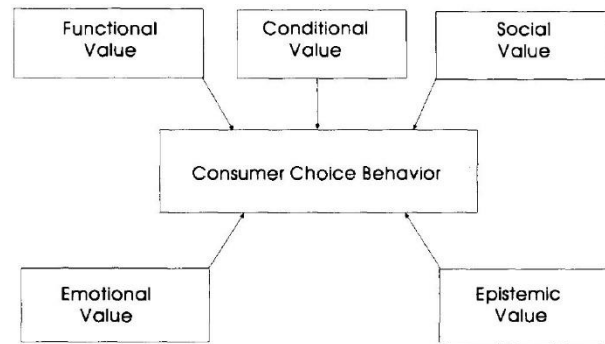


Fig. 3. The five values influencing consumer choice (Sheth et al., 1991).

Another distinction that needs to be made is the one between value-in-use and value-in-exchange, which refers to the creation (or co-creation) of value. Traditional marketing theory focused its attention on the ways in which value is created through selling/purchasing a product or service. However, according to a new “service dominant logic” value is not created (or co-created) at the moment of the exchange but it only comes into existence when the consumer actually uses the product or service. In this sense, value is co-created by all the actors in the service encounter (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). A third, consumer-centric view, exists in academia, for which value is created by the consumer based on the value-in-use. While the firm can create and communicate value propositions, it is the consumer, not the firm that creates value through dynamic situational specific value creating processes (Grönroos, 2008).

3.2.1 The nature and types of consumer value: Holbrook’s typology

Consumer value is a useful concept in the analysis of consumer behaviour, however it needs to be further specified in order to be used in an analysis. First, it is important to define what value is within the consumption experience. Holbrook (1999) understands consumer value as the evaluation of some object by a subject and defines it as an *interactive relativistic preference experience*.

By saying that consumer value is *interactive*, the author means that it is the result of an interaction between a subject and an object (tangible or intangible). Therefore, subject or object are unable to constitute value by themselves but both need to be present. The *relativistic* nature of consumer value, according to Holbrook, translates into three further specifications: comparative, personal, situational. Comparative means that the value of an object can only be stated in comparison to something else, in the sense that a value judgment entails a relative preference among objects for

a certain subject. In fact, value is also personal because it depends on who is evaluating the object. Value varies from one subject to another. Situational means that it depends on the context in which the evaluation is made. The third part of the definition, *preference*, means that the evaluation is not an absolute one but it is preferential, it entails a preference judgment among objects. Lastly, consumer value is an *experience* because it does not reside in one of the actors of the interaction (subject and object), but in the interaction itself, in the consumption experience. Therefore, value is a dynamic concept that can only be identified in relation to other objects, to the subject and to the consumption experience.

Once the essence of value has been clarified, Holbrook identifies six main characteristics of value and according to those, it describes eight types of value. The six characteristics consist of three pairs of juxtaposed concepts: intrinsic/extrinsic; active/reactive; self-oriented/other-oriented. The eight value types are: efficiency, play, excellence, aesthetics, status, ethics, esteem, spirituality. Each of these types is characterised by three of the categories mentioned above, as can be seen from the table below (Table 1). Extrinsic means that the value resides in the use of the object that the subject is relating to, while an intrinsic value resides in the consumption experience itself, for its own sake. A self-oriented value is appreciated for the subject's own sake, while an other-oriented one is appreciated for the sake of others, either on a micro level (e.g. family, friends), on an intermediate level (e.g. the community) or on a macro level (e.g. the Cosmos, Mother Nature). An active value entails some kind of manipulation of the object by the subject, while a reactive one is generated by the reaction to some object (tangible or intangible).

Table 1. Holbrook's (1999) typology of consumer value.

		Extrinsic	Intrinsic
Self-oriented	<i>Active</i>	EFFICIENCY (O/I, Convenience)	PLAY (Fun)
	<i>Reactive</i>	EXCELLENCE (Quality)	AESTHETICS (Beauty)
Other-oriented	<i>Active</i>	STATUS (Success, Impression management)	ETHICS (Justice, virtue, morality)
	<i>Reactive</i>	ESTEEM (Reputation, materialism, possessions)	SPIRITUALITY (faith, ecstasy, sacredness)

Each value will be briefly described in the following paragraphs to offer an overview of Holbrook's typology, which will constitute an analytical tool in the present work. The value of **efficiency** is extrinsic, self-oriented and active. It consists of the ratio between inputs and outputs. In particular, efficiency is often associated with convenience, which is the relation of the output to the input when the latter is time. In their study of the perception of the value of time in the context of waiting and delays, Leclerc and Schmitt (1999) note how this value is strongly situational, because how the time spent doing something is perceived depends strongly on the context and on how that time could have been spent otherwise.

The value of **excellence** is extrinsic, reactive and self-oriented. Such value consists in the appreciation of an object for its capacity to "accomplish some goal or to perform some function" (Holbrook, 1999 p. 14). This concept is strongly connected with those of satisfaction and quality. The reactive aspect of excellence is what sets it apart from efficiency: while in the latter case an object is appreciated when used for a certain purpose (therefore actively), in the case of excellence it is appreciated reactively, without actually using it for the purpose it is able to perform.

Status is seen by Holbrook as the value that derives from consumption when this is used as a tool – or a symbol – to communicate a certain message to others, with the aim to improve one's own success. In this sense, Holbrook defines this value a "political" one, because it is instrumental to having a certain effect on others. For this reason, status is extrinsic, active and other-oriented. Strongly connected to status, but of a more reactive nature is the value of **esteem**. In this case, consumption is not adjusted to communicate a message but, rather, objects of consumptions are appreciated for their ability to represent a certain prestige, thus building one's reputation.

Play is an intrinsic, self-oriented, active value because it is actively sought and enjoyed for its own sake. It usually involves having fun. The value of play is strongly situational since the same activity in different contexts can be either fun or work, alternatively entailing values of play or efficiency. Another intrinsic value is **aesthetics**. In this case, an object is valued intrinsically, reactively and without regard to any further practical purpose. When the same object (e.g. a piece of art or a car) is valued independently from its practical purpose, for example for its beauty, the value entailed is an aesthetic one. However, as soon as the same object is appreciated for its practical use (for example, in the case of the car, for the ability to take a person from A to B in a very short time), the value stops being aesthetics and becomes something else (in the example, convenience).

According to Holbrook, **ethics** involves doing something for the sake of others and in this it is an intrinsic, active, other-oriented value. The author further explains ethics as constituted of three concepts: natural, right and good. Natural is related to one person's own character, right is

connected to some kind of deontology and good is reflected in the teleology (consequences) of actions. Depending on how these three concepts are combined in situations of consumption, they can result in virtue, justice and morality. Virtue consists of a match between natural and right, justice is good combined with right, and morality stems from the correspondence between good and natural. All these concepts can be summarised under the general value of ethics. The last value in the table is **spirituality**, which entails an “intrinsically motivated acceptance, adoption, appreciation, admiration or adoration of an Other” (p.22). The consumption experience in this case is appreciated for its own sake and it is an end in itself. The “Other”, in Holbrook’s understanding, can be a deity, some magical force or superior power of any kind.

Although Holbrook’s framework can represent a valid and useful tool to conduct an analysis of a consumption experience, some clarifications need to be made. Firstly, it is important to keep in mind that several values can be co-present in the same consumption experience. This way, the limits within which Holbrook defines the eight values according to the six categories become rather blurred. For example, Wagner (1999), in her study of the aesthetic value in fashion, concludes that such a concept involves both intrinsic and extrinsic value, because an object of fashion is valued not only for its beauty but for other values such as quality and status. Secondly, the values as described in Holbrook’s framework often present “fuzzy” distinctions and the difference among values is sometimes not clear or very subtle, for example between status and esteem (Holbrook, 1999 p.188). Thirdly, as Brown (1999) and Smith (1999) point out, it is very difficult to accept the idea that Holbrook’s framework is exhaustive and comprehensive of all types of value. In the attempt to create a grand theory of value, not only the chosen values may not be the best to represent the foundation of the typology, but some important types of values might have been omitted as well. As useful as grand theories are, their shortcomings are evident when trying to employ them in a concrete analysis of data.

3.3 How can the chosen theories help contextualise the role of guidebooks in contemporary digitalised society?

The theories of information search behaviour and consumer value can help contextualise the role of guidebooks in contemporary tourism in two main ways. Firstly, they can be combined to understand what kind of uses people make of guidebooks and why. The concept of satisfying needs is recurring in literature about value and it is usually linked to a utilitarian type of value (Babin Darden and Griffin, 1994). In the various definitions of value, a similarity can be recognised between certain types of value or value dimensions and some of the needs that appeared in information search theory, especially the fundamental distinction between functional value/needs

and hedonic value/needs (Babin Darden and Griffin, 1994; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook, 1999; Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Nishimura Waryszak and King, 2006; Wong and Liu, 2011). The relationship between needs and values can be understood in the sense that value is given when a product or service can satisfy consumers' needs and wishes (Morar, 2013), however value is not only perceived when it is instrumental to satisfy a specific need, but it can consist of a spontaneous, emotional responses to the consumption activity (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Research on information search uses different terms, such as "needs", "underlying dimensions", "values" and it tries to categorise them by giving them names and labels and further explaining sub-concepts and sub-constructs (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Wong and Liu, 2011). Furthermore, Cho and Jang (2008) write about information value structure and identify several values connected to information search. However, the definitions of the values in their study are closely connected to needs, thus some uncertainty arises on what exactly is the difference between needs and values in this context. This leads to a certain confusion when looking at the topic of travel guidebooks and their use. The present work attempts to clear such confusion by combining the two theories of information search behaviour and consumer value in order to understand the guidebook not only as a source of information, which can be explained through information needs, but also as a consumer good, explained with the concept of value.

The question "why do people use travel guidebooks" can be answered in many ways and through a myriad of different terms. It is important to consider that the use of guidebooks is not only an information search behaviour, but it is also a consumer behaviour. Therefore, consumer value theory offers a valid tool to approach the topic of why consumers do what they do. The second way in which these theories can help reach the aim of the present work is by using them separately for different aspects of the use of guidebooks. In fact, guidebooks are two things in one: they are sources of information, and therefore they need to be understood as such through information search behaviour theory; but they are also objects of consumption, which people buy and use and which need to be understood within the framework of consumer behaviour. Therefore, each theory would be only useful to give a partial answer to the questions that lie at the basis of the present research. In fact, it is impossible to speak of information needs where the aspects of the guidebook do not concern the search for information. When such aspects relate to a certain value that consumer attribute to the guidebook as an object of consumption, an explanation can be provided through the concept of value. On the other hand, by attempting to explain the use of guidebooks exclusively through value theory, the reasons why people need to search information

at all would be ignored, and the sense of using the guidebook as a source of information would be lost.

4. Methodology

The present research is aimed at investigating the value dimensions involved in the use of travel guidebooks and the relationship with online information sources. The author approaches the subject from a constructivist ontological stance and the research departs from an interpretive epistemological approach. The constructivist ontological stance promotes the investigation of questions relating to how people make sense of the world around them. This way, the researcher has the chance to not only see what is going on, but also to investigate what are the “processes through which social realities are constructed and sustained” (Gubrium, 2008 cited in Silverman, 2013 p.107). Consequently, a qualitative approach was adopted and data was collected through in depth, unstructured interviews. The qualitative approach suits the aim of the research because of the intent to explore the role of an object – the guidebook - in a social setting and the values attached to it (Silverman, 2013). Exploring such underlying dimensions of a human behaviour would be impossible with a quantitative methodology. An abductive approach to the relationship between the theory and the research was considered suitable for the aim, in the sense that two main theories constituted a loose logical basis to carry out the interviews and interpret the data. However, the author aims at integrating the theories with the collected data in order to connect them and expand them with specific reference to the field of the study (Bryman, 2016). The research process has unfolded as follows.

Once a field of interest was identified and a general aim had been defined, relevant literature was collected and reviewed to identify a research gap and define research questions by gaining an overview on what had already been done about the subject (Silverman, 2013; Bryman, 2016). The review of the literature focused on two main parts: the field of study and the theoretical background. The field of study needed to be reviewed in order to define a relevant area of inquiry and assess what had already been done in relation to the topic. The theories that were reviewed were chosen by the author with two purposes in mind: information search behaviour was reviewed with the aim of understanding how the topic of travel guidebooks had been previously theorised and investigated. Value theory was reviewed with the aim of creating a loose basis for the data collection.

For the literature review, the main criteria for selecting the literature were: the recurrence of the authors’ names within the reference list (as an indicator of their prominence in the field) and the

presence of words such as “guidebooks”, “tourist information search”, “information sources” or more general terms that could provide some context to the research, such as “consumer culture”. Once a list of sources was selected, they were downloaded from the LUB database, printed out and their reference lists were consulted to repeat the process. On the basis of this “reference review”, a list of prominent authors was compiled and their articles were read and reviewed first. Successively, the author carried out online searches through LUB (Lund University database) and Google Scholar in order to integrate the list. In this phase, search terms such as “guidebooks”, “travel guidebooks”, “travel information”, “information search”, “online information search”, “tourism”, “internet”, “digitalisation” were used. At this point, attention was also paid to the date of publication with the intent of collecting more recent sources. During the process of collecting the relevant literature, the author only read introductions and conclusions of each article to identify their main contributions. Additional sources were found and purchased through online bookstores like Amazon.

After collecting a significant amount of literature, the author ranked them by priority and began thoroughly reading the articles, highlighting the texts and taking notes. On the basis of these, the literature review was written out and consumer behaviour, specifically value theory, was chosen as a main theoretical background together with information search behaviour theory. The process of literature search and review went on for the whole duration of the project and the author would periodically return to the two search engines (LUB and Google Scholar) to search for relevant terms that came up throughout the research process (for example “value”, “value theory”, “consumer behaviour”, “Information and communication technologies”, etc.). As suggested by Silverman (2013), the literature review should be an ongoing process and it should only be completed after the analysis of the data, when the researcher knows what is relevant and what is not.

4.1 Research design

The author initially considered to adopt a more deductive approach which would have meant departing from the theory, possibly formulating hypotheses and then analysing the data in light of the chosen theory. However, after reviewing the theories that initially seemed appropriate, she realised that the aim could not be reached deductively. The deductive approach, which may have even required the use of a quantitative method, presented two issues: first, it would not allow for the exploration or discovery of new concepts that were not already present within the theory. Second, the existing theories were unable to offer an appropriate framework to answer the author’s questions. This was, in part, because of a practical, temporal limitation: most theory was not recent

enough to appropriately reflect the context in which the research was conducted as well as its focus on ICTs and digitalisation. Therefore, the author decided to adopt a more inductive approach, which may be defined as abductive in the sense that a certain amount of theory was used to approach the process of data collection but it did not inform it strictly (Bryman, 2016).

4.1.1 Sampling

A population was first identified as “guidebook users”, including those who had previously used guidebooks but did not do so anymore. After reviewing the literature, the author decided to narrow down the population to the so-called “Generation Y”, as identified by Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier, (2015) with people born between the 1980s and 1990s. Even though a definition of the concept of “generation” is not agreed upon in academia, within this research the following understanding of the concept is adopted: a generation is a group of people who were born in the same period and shared the same key historical or social life events. These similar experiences have an influence on these people’s values and behaviours during their life (Gursoy, Mayer and Chi, 2008 in Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2015).

Therefore, the study focuses on a specific demographic group, that is, guidebooks users who were born between the years 1980s and 1990s. This group represents the so-called “Generation Y” and it is of particular interest for this research because it has proven to be the demographic group that uses the internet most extensively for their travel planning and, although currently having the least spending capacity compared to older groups, it is predicted to have the greatest spending capacity in the future (Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2015).

Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier (2015), in their study of the use of internet for trip planning, identify four existing generations: the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. At the time when the paper was published, Generation Y (identified as people born in the 1980s and 1990s) was the one with the lowest household income and lowest spending capacity on travel among the four, but it was predicted to have the biggest spending capacity in the future. Although Generation Y has a higher adoption rate of technology in general, according to the study 80% of all the groups reported using internet for trip planning. While younger groups still seek for a variety of sources (film, documentaries, radio), almost 1/3 of Generation X and Generation Y relies only on internet for travel planning and at least 20% of all the generations does the same. Generation Y and X were found to use social media much more than other groups. In all groups, two in every 3 travellers made more than 75% of travel arrangements using the internet. Moreover, according to the research, the general level of satisfaction towards the internet increased between 2006 and 2012.

Although generational theory is quite controversial and various definitions do not agree on the time span that encompasses a generation nor on the groups' denominations, the author found the distinction useful for the purpose of the research in consideration of the relevance attributed to the diffusion of ICTs. By choosing people who were born between the '80s and '90s, the author intended to investigate the perceptions of those people who grew up in a situation where both options (off-line and on-line sources of information) were not just available but also common for them. On the other hand, studying a younger group would be mostly unfruitful because members of the newer generation are likely still too young to plan trips and make travel decisions independently.

Relevant subjects have been selected through a purposive sampling strategy (Robinson, 2014). The subjects were found in two ways: first, the author directly contacted her friends and friends of friends who she thought might be interested in being interviewed and who responded to the characteristics of the population (born between 1980s and 1990s and users – or former users – of guidebooks): four interviewees were selected this way. The remaining eight interviewees were selected by publicly posting on two Facebook groups (one for expatriates in Copenhagen and one for Lund University students). Because the aim of the study did not include any reference to the nationality of the users, the author tried to select a sample that did not favour any particular nationality by making sure that it would be as heterogeneous as possible in this regard. In total, people from ten different countries were interviewed (Armenia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Kosovo, Netherlands, UK, USA) . However, since the author chose to ask people who were part of a group for expatriates, and since she is herself an expatriate and has friends who share the same lifestyle, the sample ended up over representing people who do not live where they were born and who have a tendency to move frequently, which may have an influence on the way they buy and use books. Another issue of representativeness could have arisen from uneven representation of genders within the empirical study. Initially, mainly women volunteered to be interviewed, so the author had to specifically seek out (through Facebook and acquaintances) male respondents. Overall, eight women and four men were interviewed, which is considered a balanced enough representation of the population. In any case, the research does not aim to generalise its results, but rather to explore the value dimensions that appear in the conversation about guidebooks. Therefore, although a diverse and heterogeneous sample was desirable, this characteristic of the population does not seem problematic enough to affect the trustworthiness of the results (Bryman, 2016; Robinson, 2014; Silverman, 2013).

4.1.2 Data collection: interviews

Data has been collected through 12 in-depth, unstructured interviews. The method was deemed appropriate to reach the aim of the research because of its qualitative nature. Interviews allow for the collection of rich, detailed data, which is fundamental in the understanding of the underlying dimensions of human behaviour and perceptions (Bryman, 2016; May, 2011). By using in depth interviews as a method, the researcher was able to ask different questions and obtain different and elaborated answers from the interviewees, which is desirable in a study like the present one, which is strongly inductive and partially explorative. Although a more structured type of interviews is more suitable when the researcher is trying to compare answers and possibly generalise the results, in this case no specific theory was considered suitable to answer the research questions appropriately and it was not possible to work deductively by creating a structured or semi-structured list of questions (Bryman, 2016; May, 2011). Moreover, the author does not aim at comparing answers and generalising results, but rather at reaching a deeper understanding of an individual experience, that is the use and evaluation of guidebooks in contemporary tourism.

The interviews lasted one hour on average, their duration ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes. The interviews took place in two countries (Sweden, Denmark) and online. They were carried out in several different places, like a public library, university classrooms, cafés, interviewees' workplaces or even outside when one of the interviewees suggested to sit outside and enjoy the sunny day. Two of the interviews took place via video call services (one using Skype and one using Google Hangouts). The choice of having video-call interviews was driven by two reasons: first, the interviewees were friends of the researcher and offered to be interviewed; second, the researcher was curious to see if there was any difference in the way the conversation would take place in different settings. The video-interview turned out to be just as comfortable and effective as the ones in person. As Bryman (2016) points out, the idea that establishing rapport would be harder in this case should not be a main concern, especially in this specific cases, where both the respondents already had a friendly relationship with the researcher. These interviews ended up offering an interesting perspective because, since both the interviewer and the interviewee were using their computers, they could browse the internet, offer specific examples when talking about online sources and deepen the talk by going online to check what they were talking about (for example, one of the interviewees went on the Lonely Planet website and tried to compare specific pages to the ones about the same topic in the guidebook he had). Moreover, this type of interview allows for a greater flexibility in terms of time and place arrangements (Bryman, 2016).

The researcher prepared a short list of questions to conduct a pilot interview. Since the pilot interview went well and the data seemed interesting, the author decided to include it in the analysis. As Silverman (2013) points out, pilot studies are only relatively useful in constructionist research, where the interviewer is interested in the interviewees' answers in order to understand how they construct reality. However, pilot interviews can improve the researcher's interviewing skills (Silverman, 2013). In fact, from the transcription of that interview, further questions were extrapolated, which had come up during the interview or which the researcher thought of after. An interview protocol was drafted on this basis which contained notes and possible questions for the interviewees. The protocol was integrated throughout the process of data collection with further questions and observations that resulted from the following interviews. Such integrations were annotated by hand on the paper. Included in the interview protocol was a grid of Holbrook's (1999) typology of values, which had been integrated with concepts from information search theory (See appendix 1 and 2). All the interviews were recorded on the researcher's mobile device and transcribed later on.

The first few questions that the interviewer asked were mainly directed at establishing rapport with the interviewee. To the researcher's advantage, the topic discussed is a rather un-problematic one and many people enjoy talking about their travel experiences. Moreover, the researcher tried to establish a conversational tone by sharing her own experiences and often commenting on the interviewee's answers. Therefore, establishing rapport was not hard and the information flow was abundant from the beginning. Only in one case the respondent would not elaborate too extensively their answers, which led the researcher to ask more questions and the data to be less rich in comparison with other interviews. In another case, the interviewee was slightly too enthusiastic about telling their own story and often did not answer the questions and went off-topic. In this case, the researcher tried to create links between the topic of conversation and that of the research by asking follow-up questions that were related to guidebooks.

Several types of questions were used. General, open questions like "do you travel a lot?", "do you like guidebooks" were followed up by more specific questions that tried to tap in the value dimensions of the respondents' opinions. Descriptive questions, such as "if you are at your destination and you wake up in the morning, when is the first moment you take the guidebook – and what do you do after?" were used to let the interviewees' recall past experiences and give input to the conversation (May, 2011). Vignette questions were used to stimulate a change of perspective from the interviewee (Bryman, 2016), for example: "if you think of yourself in 10-15 years, with a family and a full time job, do you think your opinion of guidebooks would be different?". In general, the researcher tried to reformulate the respondents' answers as much as possible in order

to clarify them or confirm them. This was especially helpful in the analysis phase, where the researcher could be somewhat sure that she did not misunderstand the responses, which is always a risk in qualitative research (Silverman, 2013).

During the interviews, the researcher showed five or six different types of guidebooks to the interviewees and asked some questions about them. This exercise had the purpose of eliciting comments from the interviewees, who were asked to say which guidebooks they liked the most and why, which ones they did not like, which ones they would or would not take with them in which kind of trip, etc. Anchoring the answers to a tangible object made it easier for the interviewees to come up with their own definitions and evaluations. Moreover, discussing the books also functioned as a stimulus for conversation and somehow “refreshed” the talk when it started to strand.

4.2 Transcription and analysis of the interviews

Analysis was conducted on the transcriptions, although the researcher also listened to every interview at least twice and some level of analysis, or at least reasoning, started during the interviews. The analysis that was conducted on the data followed some of the principles of grounded theory but it did not follow all the steps required by a grounded theory analysis. Firstly, a high amount (23) of “concepts” was produced through open coding. Such concepts were the elaborated to identify seven categories, divided in two clusters. Categories were further specified through properties and sub-properties. Throughout the research process, the author went back and forth from the categories to the data and vice-versa, in order to reach the saturation of the identified categories (Bryman, 2016). Once all the data had been collected and coded, the researcher felt that saturation had been reached and there was no need to collect further data.

All the interviews were transcribed by the author. A software (Windows Media Player) was used to slow down the audio files and occasionally to improve the quality of the sound in order to facilitate the transcription. After the first three interviews were fully transcribed, they were printed out and the author began to read them and reflect on their content. A first reading was done and it involved underlining anything that seemed relevant to the research. At the end of each of the respondents’ answers, the researcher wrote a brief comment on the margins to summarise what had been said or what possible theme or category the sentence referred to. Subsequently, the author transcribed the other interviews, keeping in mind the themes or possible categories that emerged from the first reading and began taking notes on a notebook of anything that seemed noteworthy.

Every transcribed interview was then printed out and re-read by the researcher, who kept underlining sentences and words and making notes on the margins. At the same time, actual analysis of the data begun and everything was written down on the notebook. After nine out of 12 interviews had been transcribed, printed out and re-read, the author began color-coding the data. On a notebook, all the relevant concepts from the interviews were written down and then grouped into concepts. Initially, a total of 12 concepts (including sub-concepts) was identified and each theme was assigned a colour. The transcriptions were then read again and colours were used to underline and highlight words and sentences. During this process, more concepts emerged and by the end, the researcher had identified 11 concepts plus 12 sub-concepts within them, so a total of 23 codes was used. The process continued with the transcription and analysis of the last three interviews, which confirmed that the categories had been saturated at that point.

Additionally, a general category named “role” was used to identify all passages that referred to the ways in which respondents talked about the role of the guidebook in their trips, especially with reference to the use of the internet and smartphones. Several other codes were used whenever the author would think something was relevant, although they did not constitute a proper category for the analysis. For example “WOM” (for word of mouth), “SP” (for smartphone), “integration” and “sandwich” (which referred to a possible interpretation of the data).

4.3 Ethical considerations

When conducting research, the main ethical considerations to be kept in mind are: informed consent; confidentiality; voluntary participation; possible harm to participants (Silverman, 2013; Bryman, 2016; May, 2011). The first element requires that participants must be informed about the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research. All the participants were informed of the topic of the research as well as the modalities of the data collection. People who were contacted directly were informed either through a written message or orally of the modalities and the purpose of the interview. People who were contacted through Facebook groups were informed in two steps: one generic public post stating the general topic of the research and asking for volunteers to be interviewed, and one follow-up private message giving more details. The communications contained the following elements: first, a short introduction of the researcher, followed by a short introduction of the research topic (see Appendix 3 and 4).

In the private message, the participants were also informed that they would be recorded, that they would be kept completely anonymous in the thesis and that the recordings would be deleted if they wished. This piece of information ensured the respect of the second ethical consideration,

confidentiality. Furthermore, at the beginning of every interview, the interviewee would be reminded that they would be recorded and that they could require the recording to be deleted. Interviewees were also told that their names would not be used in the thesis and they would remain completely anonymous. In the analysis and presentation of results fictional names were attributed to the 12 respondents, which point to their nationality and gender. The names used were: Monica, Donatella (Italy), Vincent (Netherlands), Anni (Finland), Milena (Armenia), Celine (Canada), Mads (Denmark), Alina (Kosovo), Luiza (Brazil), Alastair (UK-Scotland), Gwen (UK-Wales), Bob (USA).

Voluntary participation was not a concern for the researcher as all the participants offered spontaneously or in response to the public Facebook posting. Moreover, they were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time and they could refuse to answer any questions. Considering the nature of the research and the topic discussed, the researcher feels like no harm was or could have been caused to the participants.

5. The empirical data: description and analysis

The data will be now presented and interpreted through the theories of information search behaviour and consumer value. First, the results regarding the use of guidebooks will be presented, then the value dimensions associated with guidebooks will be explained in more depth.

5.1 Choosing the guidebook: a non-strategy

Firstly, the collected data has given some insights on how, why and within what limits the guidebook is used as a source of information. Only one of the respondents, Alastair, claimed to always use guidebooks, for any kind of trip; two, Bob and Vincent, said to have only used them once; two, Celine and Milena, said they used them habitually in the past but they do not do so anymore; while the remaining seven claimed to use them often or sometimes. Interestingly, among the first things most respondents mention when asked if they use guidebooks and why, is how and why they use the internet as well. One of the things that was commonly brought up by the interviewees was a general comparison between the internet and the guidebooks. The idea that emerges is that, for most respondents, if internet is easily and readily available, for example through a smartphone, there is no need to use a guidebook.

Monica: *“Well, if I am in [my home country] I can use the internet [so] [...] I won't buy a guidebook”*

Anni: *"If I go outside of Europe then I would be more willing to pay for a guidebook because also I can't use internet there"*

Milena: *"If I cannot figure out what I want to see and for some reason I don't have internet, yes, then I wish I had a guidebook"*

Celine: *"I was really late to get a smartphone [...] but then I finally got a smartphone and there was kind of no need anymore [...] now I think you can download maps even if you don't have Wi-Fi, and like everything you need is on your mobile phone so definitely, when I look back all the years that I used guidebooks and they were really critical [...] Yeah so it was kind of required because I didn't have a phone, a smartphone"*

Gwen: *"I'm sure a guidebook would have been much more indispensable [before the internet and new ITCs], but now you have so many options, especially for the practical stuff"*

It is also clear that, although most interviewees felt like they did not need the guidebook, they thought it was a nice thing to have and use. The information contained in the guidebook is usually considered useful or potentially useful, and the thought of having it with them all the time was considered a positive thing by most respondents.

Vincent: *"I'm not gonna buy them, [...] the internet is way more convenient [but I brought the one my mom had because] I mean why not, there was nice info on them"*

Anni: *"It's not like I have to have it with me, but when there is some small enough then I can just put it in my bag and then I have it there"*

Another emerging theme is the importance of the availability of guidebooks. In fact, the availability of the resources also plays a role in the choice of not using guidebooks. In using the resources that are most readily available, travellers do not think further on what other resources they could use. In particular, some respondents lamented the scarcity of bookstores in the city where they live and attributed to this part of the fault for not buying guidebooks.

[Do you think you don't buy them anymore because you would have to pay for them and online it's completely free?]

Milena: *"No because I go to bookstores less often! I'm sure the price is not a factor, I just go to bookstores less, so.."*

Luiza: *"I think not everybody buys them because it's so difficult to find them [...] first of all, I can't often find bookshops. In Germany I was like, where are the bookshops? [...] Then someone said go check 7/11"*

and we went there [...] and they had it but it was like behind of behind...so I guess nowadays you don't really find them."

From the data, it emerges that, although travellers still value guidebooks, their use "kind of faded out" (Milena). Having so much information readily available lead to the guidebooks somehow ending up in the back of people's minds, where they are easily forgotten and people "wouldn't go out of [their] way to purchase one" (Celine). However, the simple fact of talking about it during the interview made some of the people who had stopped using guidebooks question this and some said they even miss it.

Celine: "I think having this conversation I've realised how easy it made travelling and that I did use it quite a lot. But I've never thought to myself before this conversation 'I miss travel books'. I guess now that we've had this conversation, I would probably miss the simplicity of reading you know a chapter on wherever I'm going and getting [all the information]."

Mads: "If I travel now and I'm visiting friends and they're at work during the day I would just walk around a bit. I could have actually used a guidebook but I don't think about it anymore. So yeah, I miss having it on the top of my mind."

During the interviews, the topic of whether it was worth to buy and bring a guidebook during a trip was touched upon several times, in different contexts and depending on different elements. Generally, respondents seemed to believe that it would not be worth bringing a guidebook for a very local trip. Distance was evaluated differently among respondents, for example Alastair believed that only a trip within his region of residence would not be worth using a guidebook, while Monica and Celine had the same reasoning for a trip within the country of residence. Visiting friends and relatives was also a reason not to bring a guidebook (for example by Anni, Mads and Alastair) because in that case there would be no need to look for further information and the hosts could take care of organising the activities. In some cases, however, interviewees reported regretting not having a guidebook with them when visiting friends or relatives, or at least thinking that it would have been a good idea to do so (Mads, Donatella) because by not having a guidebook they had or would miss out on things to do and see.

Interestingly enough, more than one respondent showed some ambivalence when asked if they would use a guidebook for a future trip. While at some point in the conversation they would say that they would, some other times they said that they would instead prefer bringing the smartphone with them and that there would be no need for a guidebook. An example of this ambivalence can

be seen in the exchange below, between the interviewer and Mads. When the same question was asked a second time after mentioning smartphones, his answer changed:

[If you were to go to a new place, maybe far away, would you bring the guidebook?]

“Hmm yeah, I mean it depends what the occasion is but probably, I want to go to South America so I would probably use it again and it would probably be Lonely Planet again”

[When did you get your first smartphone?]

“What was it.. maybe.. I didn’t have a smartphone when I was there... maybe 5-6 years ago [...]”

[If you went to south America just for leisure, would you still bring the guidebook now?]

“Actually you know probably not.. I would probably just use my smartphone if there was signal, but I wouldn’t run around with a thick Lonely Planet”

Another insight that emerged from the data is that people who changed their attitude towards guidebooks did not do it so much in response to the development of the internet, as mostly in response to the increasing popularity of smartphones. In fact, smartphones are similar to books in several ways: they are small, portable, you can hold them in your hand and you can mimic the gesture of flipping the pages with the swiping movement on the screen.

Celine: “If you just think of how you like a laptop feels [...] even a desktop more so, but it just doesn’t feel... whereas when you have a book or your phone it’s even the same kind of motion: swiping, and sitting [...] I feel like that’s something you can do while you’re watching TV or whatever, whereas when you have your desktop it feels like it’s more work. So I think it was always a nicer experience to do it with your book or phone.”

At the same time, smartphones are something people carry with them all the time, regardless of what they are doing and where they are going, because they have a variety of functions. A book, instead, usually needs to be bought or borrowed, which almost always entails either going somewhere to get it or waiting for it to be delivered. Books also differ from smartphones in that they only have one main function: the purpose of the guidebook is quite straightforward and the uses one can make of it are limited. A smartphone, on the other hand, can perform a multitude of functions, from calling, to texting, to taking photos and so on. Moreover, carrying a book during travels sometimes represents a problem or a nuisance, for example in the case of backpackers, who try to make their luggage as light as possible, or in the case of low-cost flights, in which restrictions are applied to the weight of the luggage when boarding the plane.

Celine: “So... you know, obviously, the idea is that the books are great but like kind of a little bit of a nuisance, so if you have a phone you can access whatever country you need and you don’t have any extra weight because you’re gonna bring it with you regardless.”

Unsurprisingly, the quality of the technology owned by the traveller influences their use of guidebooks. Those travellers who do not invest in good technology generally feel like the guidebook is more necessary than those who own well-functioning devices. It is understandable that if the screen is broken or the device is likely to break or run out of battery, paper always represents a certainty. However, another thing to keep into consideration is how the destination is connected to the world wide web. It is not only a choice of the traveller whether to use a guidebook or not, because in some situations few other sources are available.

Monica: *[I wouldn't want to be without a guidebook in Indonesia because] one thing is the cities, like Bali, where if you go in a café you have Wi-Fi, but not in other cities...then they don't even understand you so well."*

Mads: *"I'd probably use google maps first [...] Because google maps tells the easiest route or the fastest way to go and public transportation... might not have for all countries public transportation, so then I might use the book."*

Gwen: *"When they don't list on the internet cause like technology wise... smaller places in India are not very connected." [...] "[For restaurants] I will use the guidebook quite often, it kind of depends on the place and how connected the place is to the internet, some places just don't have many TripAdvisor reviews"*

Incidentally, WOM and the reliance on friends' recommendations is enhanced by ICTs, as suggested by Iaquinto (2011). In this sense, Mascheroni's (2007) idea of "doubled" sociality is indeed one emergent aspect of contemporary tourism.

Celine: *"One of my friends was in south America, so pretty sure he didn't bring a guidebook [...] and he is texting me all those times asking me where did you stay, what did you do" [...] "[maybe I would post] a Facebook share saying 'hey does anyone have recommendations?'"*

The data described above implies that the search of information may not be as strategic as previously thought (Snepenger et al., 1990), at least for what concerns the choice of sources, but that a certain amount of serendipity plays into the choice of information source for travellers. Therefore, a distinction needs to be made within information search behaviour, between the choice of source and the use of information sources, that is, between "why" guidebooks are used and "how" they are used. The choice of source, as seen above, does not appear to be always strategic. The serendipitous element in the choice of information source may be justified with the fact that, thanks to the abundance and availability of information, travellers do not feel the need to actively think of which resources they need in order to make travel-related decisions. This is connected to Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier's (2015) claim that emerging ICTs support new information search

behaviours such as postponing decisions. Because a guidebook needs to be bought and read in advance, by postponing their decisions, travellers will not think in advance to get a guidebook and use it. In fact, smartphones can be said to support this kind of behaviour for the very fact that they are brought along in any case and that they can perform a multitude of functions, which include searching for information or asking for advice to friends, family or other contacts. However, for those who do use guidebooks, sometimes the choice can indeed be strategic, which is shown by the considerations they made on the “worthwhileness” of buying and using a guidebook, particularly with reference to the distance of the destination.

The constant mention of smartphones can also be explained in consideration of the importance of travel-specific social media such as Tripadvisor, other social media like Facebook and “virtual communities in general, which are said to be the elements that characterise “Tourism 2.0” (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). The use of internet is in fact well adopted and saturated, and the internet can indeed be used as an “external memory” (Sparrow et al., 2011 in Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier, 2015) that travellers rely on during their trips. Smartphones appear to be the most popular device to be used this way. In this sense, the use of smartphones is connected also to the cost of external resources, which Gursoy and McCleary (2004) claimed to be one of the determinants of information search behaviour. This because a smartphone does not need to be bought specifically for the purpose of finding travel information, while the guidebook does. Therefore, while the cost of an external source of information like the guidebook is both economic and physical, the cost of a smartphone is seen as zero because it is bought independently from the travel information search.

Thanks to the multifunctionality and omnipresence of smartphones, the distinction between internal and external sources of information seems somehow to become more blurred. In fact, by relying on smartphones (and internet access in general) as an “external memory”, even those resources that were identified as be internal (specifically, memory) become external (Fodness and Murray, 1997; Gursoy and McCleary, 2004). At the same time, due to the fact that smartphones are always with us, regardless of what we are doing, the “distance” to reach the external source of information becomes very small. Smartphones are so heavily used and relied upon that they may as well be part of our body, thus making this materially external resource feel like it is indeed part of us, and somehow internal.

On the other hand, it is also visible from the data that guidebooks have not disappeared entirely from the tourism practice, and therefore the claim that online resources are co-existing with non-online ones (Tan and Chen, 2012) is supported. Travellers can still be considered “hybrid”

consumers in that they use several sources of information (Wind et al., 2002 in Tan and Chen, 2012). However, there is a sort of logical hierarchy between the use of the internet and guidebooks, where the former comes first and the latter is often considered only necessary in case the internet is not available, but often useful in any case. On the other hand, several of the respondents admitted to not using guidebooks anymore or not using them habitually because they rely on online sources instead. Therefore, while it is true that travellers use the internet to complement other sources, it may not be always correct to claim that it generally does so without replacing them, as Beritelli, Bieger and Laesser (2007) did.

5.2 Using the guidebook: the “sandwich strategy” model

As mentioned above, a distinction can be drawn between the choice of information source and the use of the chosen sources, that is, between the “why” and the “how” of guidebook use. While the former does not appear to be entirely strategic, the latter does. Within the planning process, a pattern of guidebook use emerged from the data. A model can be created on the basis of this pattern, which will be called the “sandwich strategy” model from now on. The model indicates how different sources are used when a guidebook is one of them: the two pieces of bread represent ICT and word of mouth (WOM), which includes e-WOM, while the filling of the sandwich represents guidebooks. Additional sources that can be used for gathering travel information were mentioned by some of the respondents (for example, Alina and Celine mentioned brochures while Anni and Mads talked about documentaries), but they did not appear to have a specific place in the planning process. In the analogy, they are represented by the sides in the sandwich (salad and cheese). The analogy is to be understood in a strictly visual sense and it is in no way related to the process of eating a sandwich. Therefore, within information search behaviour, the first bun comes first, then the filling and then the second bun. This does not imply that any part is more important than the others, but only that all three are always present. In fact, a sandwich would not be a sandwich without two pieces of bread and a filling. The analogy of the sandwich is visually depicted in the graph below (Fig. 4). The relationship between sources is both logical and temporal, in the sense explained in the following paragraphs.

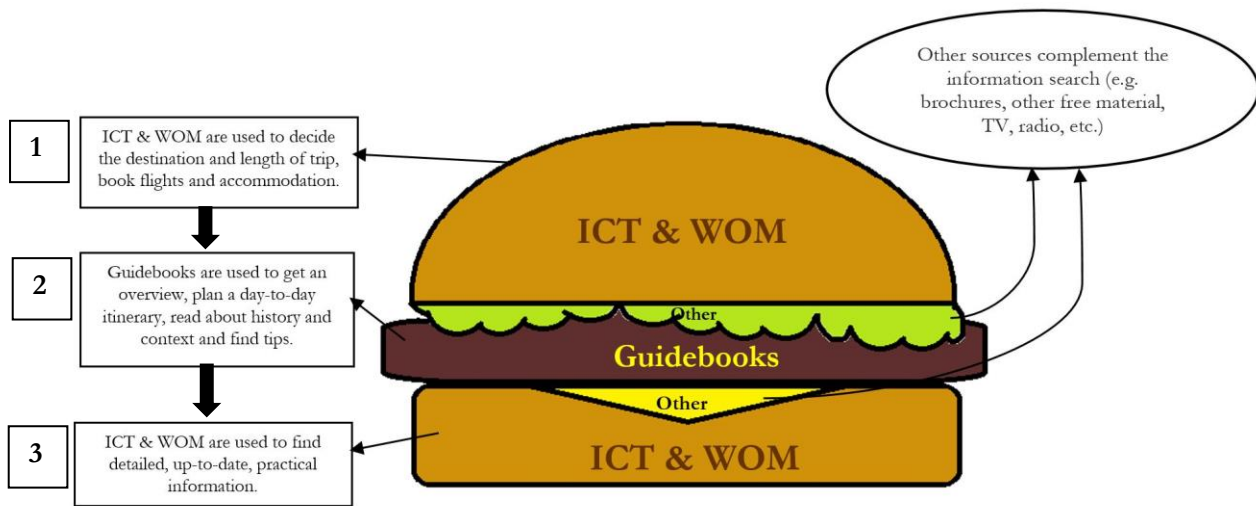


Fig. 4. The “sandwich strategy” model for travel information search (when a guidebook is one of the sources).

Firstly, a destination is chosen on the basis of internet search and WOM. Other sources, especially internal sources (memory) can play a role in the choice of destination. Within this first phase, the length of the trip is decided, flights/transportation and often also accommodation are booked. The guidebook is not used to decide the destination. Although looking at guidebooks is often considered inspiring for travellers, if it has some role in inspiring the choice of destination, respondents seemed to be unaware of it. The destination is usually already decided or even already reached when the guidebook is first considered useful, in particular for multi-destination trips. For example, Milena recalled a trip to Belgium where the guidebook was used to decide which cities to visit and how long to spend there but the choice to go to Belgium in the first place had already been made independently from the guidebook. Luiza told how she did not think she would need a guidebook in Berlin but realised she did once got there. Further, some answers to the questions like “do you use guidebooks to decide the destination?” or “how do you use the guidebook” were:

Celine: *“No I don’t think so, I think when I was travelling in South America it did help me decide my next destination but that was because I was traveling across a continent, it wasn’t a city break, I think for city breaks I already decided where I was going”*

Mads: *“If I found out there was a place I wanted – I didn’t look in it to find places I wanted to go, I heard from people where they had been and where was nice and then I looked in the book, so I used like the index to see ok I’m going to this city, what’s there to see in this city, I’m going here, what’s there to see.. so I didn’t say like there’s this this and this, where do I want to go.”*

When the traveller has chosen to use a guidebook for their trip, the second phase of the planning involves its use. Usually, the guidebook is first used a few days or weeks before the departure and its main role is to get an overview of the destination and to form an itinerary that is not too detailed. Sometimes, as for Mads and Luiza, the book is bought (or borrowed) at the destination, when the person realises they need it, and not before. The data confirms that the amount of planning varies from traveller to traveller, from trip to trip, depending also on the company, the length of the trip and the type of travel, as suggested by Luo, Feng and Cai (2004). For example, Celine claimed that during her five months' trip to South America she had more time, more freedom and less structure, and therefore she did not look at the guidebook every day. Instead, she would consult it when she was ready to go to her next destination (within the general destination of South America).

A third step in the planning is usually taken, when travellers turn to online resources and WOM again for more detailed information, in particular for restaurants, tickets, opening times for museums or other attractions and practical information. This third step is represented in Fig.4 as the bottom bun. For example, Alastair claimed that the primary source of information for him is the guidebook and then more detailed information is sought online. Another example:

Vincent: *"Well I'd use it especially when we were at home in the apartment to look at what we're gonna do tomorrow and the day after and just to look a little bit around and see oh this. We can go to this, let's go there hmm but then in the end we also needed to rent a car and then the internet was the solution."*

[...]

"Maybe we don't really need it outside, if we know where you plan to go where to go to then you just type in the address in google maps on your phone and you keep it there and you don't need the guidebook anymore."

The ability of the guidebook to give an overview is therefore appreciated, although it is not enough to plan the whole trip and other resources need to be used for anything that comes before and after getting a more or less detailed overview of the destination. Such a before/after distinction is both temporal and logical. Therefore, while the choice of sources may not be very strategic, their use is (Snepenger et al., 1990). Once the traveller has chosen to use the guidebook, its use will have a specific place in the information search strategy. This further supports the claim that travellers combine different resources and that online and off-line sources of information co-exist in travel planning (Tan and Chen, 2012).

5.3 What is valued in the guidebook

Several elements emerged from the data, that make the guidebook a valued object. The elements presented in the following sections refer to the guidebook itself, both seen as a source of information and as an object. The description of the various elements will be followed by an explanation of how these are valued, within Holbrook's (1999) framework, in the following section (5.4).

5.3.1 The guidebook as an organised hub of information

To further specify its role in the planning process, the guidebook can be seen as a hub of information. As suggested by Pan and Fesenmaier (2006), the internet can be hard to navigate and it has a high cost in terms of cognitive efforts because it consists of a complex hypertext system, and users search for hubs of information that can redirect them to other reliable sites. The combination of internet and guidebook provides a solution to this problem and the guidebook itself is sometimes used as a hub of information. In fact, the guidebook can help navigate the internet, which often appears to be too unstructured. For example, Mads noted that *"In the guidebook there's this information and there aren't links to links to links and suddenly you have 20 pages open!"*.

The data also supports the findings of Xiang and Gretzel (2010) that the internet (in their study, specifically social media) is used more for a certain kind of information like restaurants, nightlife and activities, than for others, such as history and culture of the place. On a general note, the thoroughness and completeness of online information, as suggested by previous studies (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006; Prestipino, Aschoff and Schwabe, 2006; Tan and Chen, 2012), is perceived as equivalent, if not greater, than those of guidebooks.

To say it in Bob's words, one of the main advantages of guidebooks is the "curation". While online you can find a lot of "raw" information, the guidebook is more curated in many ways. One of the most appreciated aspects of the guidebook is the fact that it is comprehensive of all the information a traveller might need. While the internet probably also has all the same information and more, using the guidebook means that the person does not need to search for it, they do not need to filter information and they do not even need to know what to look for. Users appreciate greatly the fact that guidebooks do not only give all the information "you think you might need" (Anni), but also all those you might need without knowing it. The guidebook is able to give an overview, a general idea of the place and what it has to offer. Comprehensiveness also means that all this information is present in one place and it is already "laid out", "right there for you" (Celine) so one does not need to recur to multiple sources (Monica, Milena).

Vincent: *“It’s all together and you don’t have to make too much effort for searching things to do” [...] “On the internet 9 out of 10 times it’s the same thing over and over again just on different websites, just with a little bit different opinions because people are different. It’s the same but in the guidebook you just have one thing and that’s it”*

Alastair: [If you had to give me one reason why you love guidebooks?] *“It’s having all the information in one place and not having to google stuff, it’s just there. If I want to find about said church, I know where to find it and then you got it there.”*

[...] [Of guidebooks I would miss] *“just having all the info in one place, you can just flick find a map, flick find a restaurant, flick find a bar”*

This ability of to give an overview of the place relates to Nishimura, Waryszak and King’s (2006) idea that the guidebook gives a “sense of place”. However, they only referred this to the pre-trip stage, while it seems important for respondents throughout the trip. This concept can also be related to Koshar’s (2000) understanding of the purpose of guidebooks as telling “what ought to be seen”, and it can be expanded to a more general purpose of letting the traveller know “what ought to be known” about the place. Moreover, not only the guidebook is appreciated because it gives all the necessary information, all in one place, but also because it gives information that might not be necessary and therefore people would not specifically look for, but which is enjoyed anyway when found on the book. Despite the large amount of information available online, some respondents noted that with ICTs they would not look for certain information that they would have otherwise read and enjoyed in the guidebook. For example, a general cultural introduction is very much appreciated in the guidebook, while it would be more complicated to find the same type of information online by looking at multiple sources (Alastair, Gwen, Donatella).

Mads: *“Now because smartphones are so popular and I have my smartphone... but I don’t go on my smartphone to look up what to do during the day, but if I had a guidebook... it’s a waste of time not having a guidebook.”*

According to Pan and Fesenmaier’s (2006) internet search model, online search for information is a network of goals and sub-goals and it follows a structure of “episodes” and “chapters”. This means that in order to conduct an online search, the user needs to have at least an initial goal, and therefore to know what they need to search. Such a pre-requisite, however, is not necessary when using guidebooks, which makes its use easier and less costly in terms of cognitive effort (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006).

In fact, another specificity of the guidebook, in comparison with ICTs, is that it offers a limited amount of options for any given choice that the traveller must make. Having an infinite amount of choices does not seem desirable when travelling, and many respondents reported preferring having a limited number of options (for example, Monica, Celine, Mads). This also means that a selection has been made in the guidebook, and it is not up to the traveller to filter out options. On the other hand, searching online is seen as requiring more effort (Vincent) or attention because of misleading and irrelevant information (Milena, Donatella) which require a certain work of filtering from the user.

Celine: "It gave you kind of all the different options. I guess google does that, to an extent, like google maps, but it doesn't tell you the fares associated so you might have to start looking at multiple things, whereas everything is consolidated."

However, while having a limited number of choices is appreciated in principle, often it is not accepted. This in the sense that, once the guidebook has been used to see what is possible or what is viable, more options will be searched online because the selection in the guidebook is not trusted completely. In fact, its selection might be considered somewhat arbitrary because, while it may be comprehensive of all the activities that are doable, its choice does not account for the multiple possible choices for each activity and it does not consider personal taste and preference (for example, for restaurants, car rentals or other entertainments). The fact that the guidebook offers a selection of information and options, and that it will be probably integrated with more possible choices online, supports the abovementioned understanding that travellers look for hubs of information which can help them navigate in the complex hypertextual system that is the internet. However, to expand on Pan and Fesenmaier's (2006) work, such a hub can indeed be a guidebook and not a website. The book as a hub is in fact used by respondents to navigate the internet and sometimes (for example, for Alastair) it remains the primary source of information.

Being a hub of information, the guidebook does not only provide reliable information that can help redirect travellers to other sources, but it does so in an organised way. Several respondents showed appreciation for the structure of guidebooks, especially referring to how they are often organised in areas or districts of the city, which makes navigation of the place easier. In comparison, when talking about online resources, many respondents expressed dislike for the unstructured nature of the internet, where each link redirects to other links and information can often be misleading, repetitive or too subjective. The guidebook can even help navigate the internet in the sense that the primary source of information would be the guidebook and then more information would be sought online (Alastair, Mads). This way, the structured nature of the

Vincent: *"I think on the internet there's only... if you google for place name you'll find the most popular attractions or most popular things to do like on the first couple of links, but if you have those guidebooks I think there's also some less popular attractions that don't pop up easily on google, which are still nice to do"*.

Alastair: *"That one has excellent tips for small B&Bs, whereas you wouldn't find those if you looked on hotels.com, because you wouldn't think to drill down and look at the small B&Bs and boutique hotels, so it's very good for that"*.

A guidebook will also give tips on how to behave or not behave somewhere, which a traveller might not realise is important otherwise.

Anni: *"Also because the book has some don't do this and this, there's like some hand signs that are not really a good idea when you go to other countries and... was it Singapore? Maybe it was Singapore that they don't allow bubble gum"*

In fact, having a guidebook might make some people feel safer, even though its actual utility in situations of danger or distress might be very limited. In many ways, however, a guidebook is considered to help travellers make safer choices and access valuable information in case of danger. For example, as mentioned above, many respondents mentioned how they would find tips and "watch-outs" in the book, which they would have not known otherwise. Information on how to behave or how to not behave can contribute greatly to making a traveller feel safe. Practical information such as phone numbers and contacts of embassies, hospitals and emergency numbers (Milena) are also mentioned among the things that can help feel safer when travelling.

Alastair: *"When we go to South Africa we have to bear in mind a couple of travel safety tips, because South Africa is a little bit more dangerous. So some things, they have some really excellent tips in the South Africa [guidebook] about what not to do, good travel tips to stay safe, things that I might have not thought about, you know."*

One of the respondents emphasised how important it is to be safe if you are a female solo traveller, and having a guidebook can somehow be a backup in case of danger.

Gwen: [You mentioned that it's important to have the guidebook if you're a female solo traveller. Do you think that the gender matters?] *"Yeah I think so, I think as a female traveller, you're always aware of safety, you can never really forget about it. It's risky to not be considerate, so things like that that give you some backup if you get into difficult situations."*

What respondents say about “tips” and “whatch-outs” relates to what Wong and Liu (2011) have called itinerary improvement needs, which mean that people will refer to the guidebook to find information allows them to improve their travel components and plan their own itinerary. This consists of “extra” information that is not strictly necessary to successfully complete the trip. Moreover, security needs appear in relation to this feature of guidebooks. Security needs are not only connected with risks such as war, terrorism and natural disasters, as suggested by Wong and Liu (2011) but also to general personal safety, both physical and economic, especially at certain destinations where the local culture is a source of concern. For example, several respondents mentioned the risk of being scammed in certain places (Bob, Gwen). The connection between safety and gender appears only in one of the interviews (Gwen), however it was suggested in previous research that the use of guidebooks may be related to gender (Nishimura, King and Waryszak, 2007; Luo, Feng and Cai 2004). Safety could be indeed the link between such data and a gender issue, where female travellers do use guidebooks more than male travellers because may feel like they are more likely to find themselves in unsafe situations and therefore have stronger “security needs” (Wong and Liu, 2011).

5.3.2 Trustworthiness of the guidebook as a source of information

All the respondents, except for one, stated that they consider guidebooks a trustworthy source of information. The one interviewee who admitted not trusting guidebooks entirely, Alina, said that she felt, about shopping and food in particular, that the suggestions made by the guidebooks often seemed arbitrary and therefore she assumed that certain commercial activities sponsored the publication. To the question whether they trusted the information in the guidebook, everybody else answered positively, although often specifying within which limits. In particular, the information contained in the guidebook was almost exclusively double checked to verify that it was still valid. On the other hand, all the respondents claimed that they habitually double check the information they find online because they believe it might not be trustworthy or credible. Even when they claimed to trust online information, they often felt the need to specify that the reason why they could trust it was that they knew how to use it, that they would not accept anything at face value or that they would take that information with a pinch of salt.

Celine: “I feel like the book I trusted 100%, I never questioned the books. Whereas when I’m online I definitely... even people’s reviews sometimes are like ‘eeeehhb are you just like an angry person?’” [...] “Online I think.. it’s not that I don’t trust it but I feel like I have to double check everything”

Gwen: “Sites like TripAdvisor [...] it’s so up to the minute and it’s people who’ve been there. But I don’t always think that’s reliable, I think you have to take it with a pinch of salt, and with reviews people

sometimes are just... grumpy! Like, I stayed in this hotel in san Francisco and someone gave it one star and in the review they said the elevator was too slow..."

Donatella: *[After mentioning various online sources she would use regularly] "Hmm let's say I take them with a pinch of salt, because for me that fact that there was no Nutella for breakfast is not a good reason to give one star to a hotel!"*

The authors of guidebooks are somehow seen as more authoritative than people who post online, they are believed to know the destination well, possibly to have lived there, and they are thought to be more competent than online posters. It even seems that the very fact that the book has been published by a certain publisher grants its authors a level of authority.

Alastair: *"I know that they're not bribed or anything, and I know they must be good authors to work on a Lonely Planet, but if it was just those two guys then I wouldn't buy the book because they don't have any merit, it would just be two guys who wrote a book [...]" [...]* "This is the thing with the internet: you can find a lot of information but can you find quality information? Can you find a credit to the information? Is it from a reliable source?"

Donatella: *"On the guidebook I think there's more trustworthiness because the author has some more authoritativeness, because it's someone who knows the city, who has been paid to write about it, who has done an analysis. I also trust a lot the information posted by users. With a pinch of salt. [...]* So I trust them and not trust them."

In many cases, following the information given in a guidebook is an assurance of quality and standard, especially for accommodation and food.

Monica: *"On the internet you can find anything, while the guidebook is a concentrate of tested things"*

Gwen: *"And I think for me it's really important that accommodation is of a reasonable quality, it doesn't have to be expensive but it has to be safe and clean, and I like to eat in good restaurants and know a restaurant is good"* [And how do you find that information?] *"Sometimes with TripAdvisor, sometimes with the guidebook, cause at least you know it's gonna be decent."*

The subject of standard and quality is often referred to specific brands of guidebooks. Brands are usually identified with the title of the series or the publisher, for example "The Rough Guide" or "Frommer's", which are the names of the series, and "Lonely Planet" or "DK", which are names of publishers. For some of the respondents, the brand of the book is very important and they claim they would not even consider buying a different one. For others, the choice is based on various factors, from price, popularity, association with a certain type of travel (like the backpacker

experience), or just because they saw their friends using that specific brand. In any case, brand does appear to influence the perception of quality of the book in several cases.

For example, Alastair was an enthusiastic Lonely Planet user and had some strong opinions on its quality:

[You only buy LP?] *“Nowadays yeah, I think they’re the best. You don’t get – smaller one has a lot more pics, more visual stuff. The big one doesn’t have that but then it has a lot more about restaurants and drinking and hotels.”*

“I think the DK stuff is just, it’s a lot of crowd pleaser. But for me I want it to be much more out there, and I want it to be much more detailed.”

[What if it’s another publisher, if for some reason you’re unable to buy a LP?] *“I’d order it, I just like... the DK ones are very glossy and lots of pics but they don’t really tell you anything of what’s good about food or anything. I think it’s almost too basic and it’s just.. the DK and the top ten ones are just glossy overviews for pensioners [...].”*

Not being updated is constantly brought up as a shortcoming of print guidebooks. It is the main reason why people would not trust a guidebook, which is otherwise a very trustworthy source of information. At the same time, everyone is able to devise their own strategy to overcome this shortcoming: either they consider the date of publication during the purchase and make sure they have the most updated one, or they turn to the internet to check that the information is still valid.

Milena: *“I think the main problem is that guidebooks are not updated. Because... if I have a guidebook and it has like opening hours of a museum and ticket price and I go there, it’s closed and it turns out that two months ago they changed the opening hours and the ticket prices changed”*

Alastair: *“I looked at the restaurants that were recommended [in the guidebook] and then I used those recommendations to have a look on TripAdvisor at recent reviews. To see – is this restaurant still good, has the menu changed, has it changed over and gone downhill or what?”*

Donatella: *“I used [the guidebook] to see the main sites, because monuments don’t change much, then I integrated it maybe with TripAdvisor for advice on restaurants because those were more reliable [...].”*

Users even establish a certain length of validity, like five or ten years, some sort of “expiration date” after which they should get a new guidebook because the one they have is not valid anymore.

Vincent: [If now came out a guidebook of Europe based on the cheapest beers?] *“Ah well then for now and for the next 3-4-5 years it could be useful”.*

Anni: *"It depends when they are published so if it's five years old maybe [I wouldn't trust it] but well this is a couple of years old, so... I think because they also say the price of this food costs this much in this place... so that's probably not true anymore and there's been kind of inflation and.. everything"*

Alastair: *"Like this one from the Netherlands is from a couple of years ago, so it's still good"* [And if you had to go again, would you buy a new one?] *"To the Netherlands? No, I would maybe update it after 10 years"*.

Interestingly, the use of the internet to integrate information from the guidebook can result in an enhancement of the guidebook as source of information. Rather than diminishing its utility, the possibility to use the internet to add to what the guidebook has to say transforms its shortcomings into "non-problems". While the lack of updated content, of multiple alternatives and of consumers' opinions may have represented some of the issues with the use of guidebooks in the past, the possibility to turn to online sources for those types of information means that such issues can be easily overcome. What the guidebook is lacking, can be found on the internet.

The credibility of guidebooks as a source of travel information had been found to be superior to any other source by Nolan (1967). However, Tan and Chen (2012) found that blogs were first for credibility among information sources. While it may be hard to create a ranking of credibility, as these authors attempted, it is still a significant piece of data that guidebook users generally believe them to be a trustworthy source of information. In the general comparison between guidebooks and online sources, the former is preferred for credibility, in the sense that users will not double check what they read on a guidebook to make sure that it is true or correct. Again, a smaller cognitive effort is necessary when using guidebooks rather than the internet. However, one specific aspect is not trusted in guidebooks, and it is its validity in time, or updatedness.

As for the objectivity of guidebooks, previous research states that guidebooks strongly mediate place representation and image formation (Nishimura Waryszak and King, 2006; Wong and Liu, 2011; Zillinger, 2006). Being a socially constructed representation of reality, it cannot possibly be seen as objective (Lew, 1992; Iaquinto, 201; McGregor, 2000). However, in users' minds, the guidebook can be seen alternatively as objective or subjective, and either of these can be considered an advantage or a disadvantage. In the comparison with user generated content, guidebooks are believed to be generally more objective, while the former is instead strongly reflective of the poster's personal taste. This can be seen either as a positive or a negative thing by respondents, depending on context. In some cases, it is negative because the personal taste of the poster might not be the same as the reader's (Vincent, Gwen), while some other times having very personal opinions helps "weigh the positives and the negatives" (Vincent). Despite trusting the guidebook,

one respondent (Milena) expressed her doubts on the authoritativeness of the guidebook, because it is not an objective source of information but it still represents someone else's opinion. For others, the guidebook was not considered an objective source of information, but its subjective point of view was trusted and it was considered an advantage (Alastair).

Connected to the trust people put into guidebooks or other sources of information is the purpose for which that information has been published. The general conception is that online information can be posted for the most various reasons and for the most various audiences, while guidebooks are written for tourists with the purpose of guiding them at their travel destination. This has consequences both on the trustworthiness of the information and on its usefulness for travelling. In fact, some people might mistrust information because directed at promoting a place or a product. Even official tourism websites might be considered less credible than guidebooks because their purpose is to persuade people to go there.

Celine: "You might not realise [...] maybe you think you're on a blog for tourism [...] but then you find that you're on the tourism [board] site, and then you're like 'ooooh I don't know now because this is their goal, it's to get people to come here.' Whereas I guess this is an independent book, I assume it's written by an independent, written by the publishing company or whatever, Lonely Planet, so they didn't have affiliations with tourism Sidney or whatever."

Alastair: "The internet does often give out information and it's not accredited and people just buy it at face value and they don't realise is there any reason for this, who's the target audience, what's the purpose of the article? And this goes for news but it's the same with tourism, people might have an agenda or they might just be targeting old people..."

Gwen: "They're nicely written, whereas on the internet there might be a site that's trying to sell you the place, whereas in the guidebook is written more... neutral". [...] "I think you can find a site for a particular place but it might be set up by the tourism board of that country and it's written to try and persuade you to go there and not really telling you much about the place"

On the other hand, if the information is not written with the tourist in mind it will be not as useful to plan a trip as it might if it were written specifically for tourists.

Donatella: "I'd say that the guidebook is thought to make you explore. If you look for Barcelona online, you will get the list of churches but maybe not which itinerary to follow or why that area is so particular [...]"

As noted by Tan and Chen (2012), guidebooks are preferred to other less travel-specific sources of information because they are written with the tourist's needs in mind. In contrast to what Tan

and Chen (2012) found, however, guidebook users trust guidebooks more than online sources in general, even those that are more travel-specific. Characteristics of the guidebooks such as trustworthiness, quality and specificity for the purpose of travelling, answer to a functional type of needs to gain knowledge about the product, reduce uncertainty, maximise utility and ensure efficiency (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998), as well as quality information needs, which are satisfied by accurate, concise, up to date and objective information (Wong and Liu, 2011).

5.3.3 The relevance of physical characteristics of guidebooks

Besides being a source of information, the guidebook can also be understood as a physical object. In this regard, several elements were considered relevant by the respondents. To begin with, the print guidebook is a tangible object. This element is often mentioned in the interviews and, by itself, it is considered an advantageous feature of the book. The fact that the book is tangible is mainly brought up in comparison to the lack of tangibility of online resources. Also, the portability of the book is appreciated. Several interviewees mentioned how it is a good thing to just have the book with you, even if you are not necessarily using it.

Different things are valued at different moments, which supports Bieger and Laesser's (2004) suggestion that the topic of information sources for travel decisions should be studied with a process approach because information needs and behaviours change throughout the decisional process. In particular, when using a guidebook, respondents claim to value certain things, especially inherent to the contents and the information in the book. However, when talking about buying books or when asked to choose among the books the interviewer is showing them, they appear to focus more on aesthetic elements such as pictures and design.

For example, Celine first said:

"I mean I guess these first few [pictures] maybe to set the scene, especially when you're deciding whether to buy it or not, but for me it was more about the actual info and the maps inside and yeah just kind of the info was more critical than the pics"

But when asked to choose among the six guidebooks that the researcher brought, the same person discarded two of the books without even opening them, therefore judging them by their appearance and not considering the content at all.

Familiarity with the format of the guidebook is also of relevance. Several respondents claimed that they were more or less loyal to a brand because of their format and structure, which they were comfortable with because they had already used books from the same series. Being already

acquainted with the type of guidebook, usually identified with the publisher or the name of the series, makes navigation easier and contributes to making the whole experience more enjoyable.

Celine: [Why would you pick those?] *“Because they seem like they’re easy to navigate. This one is the format that I’m comfortable with, which is the Lonely Planet format. [...] that are visually nice and easy to read”*

One thing many respondents considered particularly useful in guidebooks are maps. The fold-out, paper maps are one very important tool for navigation and one of the things within the guidebook that many people mention and look for. Language guides (phrasebooks) are also mentioned as a useful perk of guidebooks (Vincent, Anni, Gwen).

Anni: *“Sometimes I use the map, now I don’t use [it] here because I have a better phone operator and I can use internet in all of Europe, so it’s kind of not so useful anymore to have a map, but usually I get the small [guidebooks] to have a map.”*

Celine: *“And for me the weekender city guides were useful because they had maps in them and often they even had like a foldout map in the back, so that was really handy because it was not all the info I need for the city but It was like... it helps me with directions”*

The reliability of the guidebook is especially brought up in consideration of the shortcomings of technology: while a digital device can run out of battery, stop working for any reason, not connect to the internet or be stolen, the guidebook is a reliable object that will not likely break or be stolen during the trip. A book cannot stop functioning or run out of battery, and since it contains the information within itself, it cannot fail to display or reach information, as a device that fails to connect to the internet would.

Milena: *“In my experience total reliance on internet while you’re travelling is not a good idea... anything can happen... the roaming doesn’t turn on, the phone breaks down [...] so I think that’s the main advantage, that it’s with you and nobody wants to steal it, unlike phone that can be stolen”.*

Alastair: *“It’s almost like that safety blanket that you have, you know. So if suddenly the weather does turn against you and it starts raining and you planned to go see this outdoor attraction, then you can just decide ‘oh you know what there’s a really good museum, let’s do that’.”*

Size and weight of the book represent a quite common concern for travellers. Three types of travel are especially mentioned in this regard: backpacking, weekend breaks and moving abroad. In the first case, backpackers try to make their luggage as light as possible since they will have to carry it on their shoulders for several months. It is a practice among backpackers, for example, to leave in

the hostels the guidebooks of countries they have already visited and pick up the one for the next destination. In the second case, while travelling with low cost airlines allows for many short trips, commonly called by the respondents “weekend breaks” or “city breaks”, it also imposes some restrictions on the weight and size of the luggage, which means travellers are not so inclined to carry an extra book if it is not necessary. When moving abroad, as well, several respondents claimed it would not be worth it, or would be even “ridiculous” (Celine) to pack up books and pay for shipping them internationally. This doesn’t mean that they don’t use it, as sometimes they use it and then leave it behind. Some other times they prefer not using it at all. For example, Gwen decided to not bring a print guidebook during her trip to India because of the size of the book and instead she used an e-book.

Gwen: *“I’ve got lots of them at home [...] in my bookshelf. Sometimes if I’m worried about the weight of my bag, I can leave them in the hotel or hostel, I’ve left quite a few in hotels and hostels.” [Does it make you sad?] “It does make me sad! Especially if I had written down notes..”*

The cost of a guidebook influenced both the choice between having or not having a guidebook and the one between different brands. In particular, this was mentioned for students and backpackers, who usually have budget restrictions. Vincent, for example, did not see the point in spending money on something they would never use again and believed it was better to borrow it from the library. Anni made a very clear argument on how she would not buy Lonely Planet guidebooks because of their price since with the same amount of money she could buy train tickets, so she preferred going for less expensive guidebooks or not buying them at all. On the other hand, for some of the respondents price was not a factor at all, for example Milena said that price did not discourage her from buying guidebooks because they cost just as much as other books.

5.3.4 Non-functional aspects of guidebooks

Having a guidebook is a way to get to know a place that is foreign. When travelling, people want to at least have an overview of the place they are visiting. However, the amount and type of knowledge they do want to have relies on a delicate balance. In fact, knowledge is not always a desired state. There is a “sweet spot” between knowledge and ignorance that is desired by travellers. While gaining knowledge is a typical functional need of the traveller (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Wong and Liu, 2011), not having too much knowledge answers to a different type of needs, of a more hedonic nature. Namely, it is related to the need to seek for novelty, variety and creativity – called by Vogt and Fesenmaier “innovation needs”. For example, if travellers go to distant or remote places, part of the reason why they do it is because they do not know what is to be found there and they want to discover it

on the way. However, although this is not seen the same way by all respondents, a pattern emerges: the farther the travellers go, the less they feel they know the place and the more they feel they need to have a guidebook with them. There is a connection between the usefulness of the guidebook and the distance of the destination from home, which is also often associated with the knowledge of the place.

Monica: [Why did you feel like you did not a guidebook in Croatia but you did in Indonesia?] *“Because there’s the Ocean in between! [...] When you’re so far from home it’s nice to have a friend [the guidebook.]”*

Alastair: *“[The guidebook is an important part of my trip] because it helps, particularly in a big country like South Africa, to see what is viable, what is recommended, is this town worth it. And the farther you are from home, the less you know.”*

The amount and quality of information they get is an important aspect of the travel experience and there needs to be a balance between what they know and what they don’t.

Vincent: *“I mean, if you want more specific info then why even go there? I mean.. [...] Like if you go to some castle or whatever or a museum and you read very specific info about that, why would you then even go to it if you already basically know everything [...] I think it might ruin an experience [...] it’s nice to have basically a lack of knowledge before going into something. [...] It’s the thrill of the unknown!”*

In some cases, they emphasised how they even like not knowing where they are going at all.

Anni: *“After you’ve seen the museums you want to see and you ate something then you go to get lost. Sometimes it’s not really... most of time it doesn’t really end up anywhere so I just end up walking around but sometimes I find something nice”.*

The topic of spontaneity was touched upon in several interviews. Interestingly, the guidebook can be seen as fostering spontaneity as well as hindering it. Generally, people seem to make a stronger connection with the amount of planning instead of having or not having a guidebook. Some of the respondents, however, did draw the connection with the guidebook.

Mads: *“If it’s in a warm country, which I like, I’ll sit outside in a bench [with the guidebook] and see ‘ok where to go next?’ You know, it’s very spontaneous and I like that.”*

Alastair: *“If you’re in a city and you think ‘ah, I want to do something different today but I don’t know what’, if you didn’t have the guidebook you wouldn’t know what else was out there, whereas if you do have the guidebook you can see ‘do a day trip to here, that sounds quite nice, let’s take a look at the phone, oh that’s very pretty, how far is it away, 30 min by train’...”*

Donatella: *“I’d say I like having the guidebook because it allows me to see more things, then at some point during the day I also like to put it away and walk on my own. So also not being dependent on the guidebook or the internet”*

Some of the respondents associated the guidebook and planning with the amount of responsibility that lied on them for the specific trip. Understandably, the more people would rely on them, the more they felt like they needed to plan and the less they were spontaneous. The guidebook represented an element of reliability in this case.

Mads: [If you think like in 10-15 years from now, maybe you have a family with kids [...] would you bring a guidebook?] *“Yeah I probably would actually, because then it’s also important for my family that there’s probably some structure, then I can’t be as spontaneous as if I’m travelling alone.”*

This piece of data can be explained through information search behaviour theory, and in particular through the needs and values that information search is related to. On one hand the guidebook has the role of letting the traveller know “what ought to be seen” (Koshar, 2000). It is expected to fulfil certain functional needs, such as gaining product knowledge, reducing uncertainty, maximising utility and ensuring efficiency (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998) as well as “itinerary improvement”, “quality information”, “security” needs (Wong and Liu, 2011; Tsang, Chan and Ho, 2011). On the other hand, the guidebook is also expected to allow for the satisfaction of other needs, such as hedonic needs and innovation needs. According to some of the respondents, certain experiences are not possible if the information is too rich: in order to satisfy experiential needs by actually experiencing a place or an event, the person needs to have a certain level of knowledge that will allow them to understand what is happening, but that will not spoil the whole experience for them. Therefore, the guidebook is required to leave some space to ignorance in order to allow for more hedonic needs to be satisfied. The same can be said of needs such as novelty seeking and creativity: too much information would not allow for an adventurous or risky experience to be such, but at the same time a certain level of information is required in order to mitigate the risks entailed by such adventurous or risky experience.

Another example of non-functional needs that drive information search behaviour are “sign” needs, which can be symbolic expression and social interaction (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1988). A symbolic element clearly emerges, which can take various forms and shapes. Using or not using a guidebook can be associated with possessing a status or belonging to a group. Having a guidebook would be mainly associated with belonging to the general group of “tourists”. This seems self-evident because of the nature of the guidebook, and it was confirmed by interviewees. However, when asked whether they associated the use of guidebooks with a specific type or category of

tourists (for example, according to the distinction between “tourist” and “traveller”), opinions were mostly divergent.

Anni, for example, created a whole categorisation by herself, stating the following:

“I think a tourist is the person who only goes like to the city, and they usually pick like capitals or the big cities and they go there and they follow the books and they go to these places like tourist places. And I think that traveller is more like they go somewhere and they go on their own and.. [And how does the guidebook work with that? Do you associate a type of guidebook with..] Yeah I think these ones are for tourists and then those with like more local information are for travellers.”

Other respondents, like Monica, said to believe that those who do not use a guidebook might be somehow less “intelligent” travellers or might miss out on things. For example:

Alastair: [So what do you think of people who don’t use guidebooks?] *“I don’t judge them but I think they might miss out on some stuff that’s really really fun. Also, if you take Paris, they’re gonna go to the Eiffel tower and Notre Dame, but maybe they won’t go to the Pompidou centre for example, are they gonna experience the small markets by the seine in the morning?”* [And those are the things that the guidebook would tell you to do?] *Exactly. [...]*

Age and maturity is a recurring theme. Several respondents said that when they were more immature they would be less likely to use a guidebook, while growing up they understood how useful it can be. Being young, in fact, is associated with a more superficial kind of travel, where the purpose of travel is just to “tick things off the ‘must see’ list” (Celine) or even where being seen with a guidebook would be considered a negative thing. For example, Monica claimed that she might associate guidebooks with anything negative when she was younger and immature, while now she would instead believe that a person using a guidebook is a more intelligent traveller, who does not “stop at the first thing they see”.

Status is also associated to another aspect of the use of guidebooks, which is how they can be used to “show off” to others by displaying them in a bookshelf or in a visible place at home.

Celine: *“I think when you were younger it was definitely a show off, like ‘look at where I’ve been!’. And when I go to other people’s homes I’d be like ‘oh did you [go there]?’.”*

Vincent: *“Eh.. it’s nice to display it but it’s also a bit of a showing off or.. oh I’ve done this, oh I’ve read this.. look at me...”*

In other cases, using a guidebook, and possibly a certain brand, signals that the person belongs to a certain group, for example those of backpackers. According to Mads, he would rather use a

guidebook and not a smartphone because the former is “part of the backpacking scene” and the latter is not. Using a guidebook was sometimes associated with being a “vintage” traveller “with the book under her arm” (Donatella) or an “old fashioned” one (Luiza). In this sense, the guidebook can be understood as a symbol and mediator of tourist identity.

To explain this piece of data information search behaviour theory does not provide a useful tool. We cannot talk about information needs here because these aspects of the guidebook do not concern the search for information. A better explanation of this piece of data can be achieved using the concept of value instead of needs. In fact, they relate to something else entirely, which is a certain value that consumer attribute to the guidebook as an object of consumption. Needs are something that people have *a priori*, before the consumption experience, while value is the outcome of such experience (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994), and therefore it exists *a posteriori*. The symbolic value of guidebooks begins to exist with the consumption itself. In the data, only in one occasion the choice of using a guidebook was driven by a need for symbolic expression, namely when Mads claimed that he would use a guidebook and not a smartphone for a backpacking trip because it is part of the “backpacking scene”. In all other cases, the symbolic value of guidebooks did not answer to any specific need, but it was rather something that people associated with the use of guidebooks *a posteriori*.

Using guidebooks can not only be useful but it can also be an enjoyable thing in various ways, as several authors have found in previous literature (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1999; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Wong and Liu, 2011; Cho and Jang, 2008). The data, for example, shows that guidebooks are a source of entertainment for many people when they go to bookstores and wander in the travel section, looking at guidebooks, flicking through and reading into them. This activity is very common, even among those who do not use travel guidebooks anymore or habitually. Browsing in the travel section is a way to “dream” and get inspired for future travels, a way to kill some time, or it is interesting for other reasons. One of the respondents, Mads, even claimed that he does not like to go to the travel section in bookstores because if he did, he would want to go to all the places and he could not.

Question: Why do you stop to look at guidebooks when you go to a bookstore?

Monica: *“It makes me dream. [...] It makes me dream of travelling... going to places... and I see all the guidebooks and I think that little by little I will go to all those places.”*

Milena: *“I’m especially curious about the places where I’ve already been, I like seeing what they’re writing about it [...] it’s interesting just like to see, remember the place”*

Alastair: *“Because I enjoy looking and get inspiration for future trips”*

When buying a guidebook, some purely hedonic feelings come into play, such as excitement and anticipation. In general, guidebooks often somehow allow people to fantasise, not just at the moment of the purchase but even after the trip, when they lie in a bookshelf and people look at them and remember the trip.

Monica: *“When I buy it I am very satisfied. I mean, I buy it and I say ‘ah! Finally!’.”*

Alastair: *“It makes me excited! Because I know that I’m going on my trip in the coming few weeks or months.”* [The guidebook itself is exciting?] *“Yeah it’s exciting because you know that you’ll end up going there. Every time I bought a guidebook I’ve ended up going to that destination. So yeah that’s exciting.”*

During the trip, the guidebook can be a source of entertainment in various ways. One common way is to read it to kill time while in the apartment/hotel like Vincent said he did or during travel time like Celine. People may also read individually from the guidebook and then share the information with their travel partner/s at a later moment, which for example Monica and Donatella did. Gwen and Donatella use guidebooks for learning too, which is generally seen as an enjoyable activity. In the planning too, Bob claimed it would be much more fun to plan a trip with friends and “a bunch of guidebooks” than it would be sitting each at their computer.

Gwen put a lot of emphasis on the writing style, on how a guidebook needs to be well written and this is what sets the books apart from online sources of information; while Donatella, when showed the six guidebooks the interviewer had brought, claimed that she would read all of them, although at different times and for different purposes. For example, those that had more text and looked not so easy to navigate, would have been used as “good night stories” and read before bed or in her spare time before the trip.

While on digital devices you can interact with the contents, with the guidebook you cannot really establish any form of interaction with the information contained in the book, however what you can do is interact with the book itself: writing notes and comments, highlighting, circling, ripping off pages, making marks, insert various objects in the book and so on.

Milena: *“It kind of has visible and tangible information, it’s not like when you google something, your attention span just jumps from one thing to the other and then you forget what you’ve seen and you forget what you want while with the guidebook it’s like you can put a page mark and whatever”*

Alastair: *“Some people say you can take an iPad and flick through it [...] but for me it’s.. nah, I can deface [the book] if I want to, I can circle or highlight or use the maps here..”*

Moreover, the tangible nature of the guidebook allows for a certain level of personalisation. By being able to write on it and making marks, the guidebook becomes a unique object that is strongly connected to the owner’s travel experience. Some respondents also valued the possibility to pass the book on or it being given by a friend as a gift. Making it personal by adding or commenting on information present in the book is one way to create a personal and special gift. Gifting, lending or just showing the guidebook to other people is also something people like to do and which is made possible by having the print book. This is also justified with the fact that people like to share their travel experiences and give their opinions and suggestions to others.

Celine: *“[...] it was super sweet! So she like said you know I stayed in this hostel, this restaurant was nice.. avoid this area or just kind of you know gave her personal notes and gave [her guidebook] to me as a gift. So that was pretty special.”*

Alastair: *“If a friend said I’m going to the Netherlands then I’d go yeah take this, find the page with the restaurant and tell them to go there”*

The interaction and personalisation mentioned above is also connected to the “souvenir feeling” attached to guidebooks. An object that has been used and personalised makes for a very special souvenir. For example, Monica said that she and her boyfriend signed the guidebook after using it for a trip together and that she looks at it in the shelf from time to time to think back of the trip.

In fact, the fact that the guidebook is a tangible object also means that it can be kept, displayed and looked at after the trip. Milena called this a “souvenir thing” that guidebooks have, especially after the trip, because *“they are very like souvenirs of the place when I visited [...] and I remember ‘oh I’ve been here and here’”*. At the same time, this is not an indispensable element, especially when other necessities come along. For example, when moving to a different country, not having a lot of space at home to store them or if the traveller is concerned about the weight of their luggage, guidebooks can be left behind or given away to other people. The “souvenir thing” is not by itself a reason enough to buy and use guidebooks, although it is appreciated when it is there. Only one of the respondents did not care at all about this aspect. Being able to put marks and write on the book also contributes to making it a more unique kind of souvenir.

Milena: [What about the “souvenir” feeling.. can you just do without that?] *“Yeah, that’s the thing. It’s nice when you have it but when you don’t have it you don’t miss it.”*

Celine: *“I liked having them afterwards as a bit of a souvenir. My south American one, I drew for all the different countries I drew the path that I actually took and sometimes I wrote comments in the book for the shorter weekend trips. [...] [and] it’s nice to have on your bookshelf. Do I still have them? No. but that’s because I’ve moved overseas and it’s ridiculous to pack and pay for books to be transported internationally!”*

In the examples given above, the activities that are found to be enjoyable by guidebook users concern both the search for information and the consumption as such. Therefore, we can speak of both information needs and consumer value. In fact, information search is not only functional, but it can also satisfy hedonic. Within the literature, such needs are identified as experiential and emotional needs, aesthetic needs, innovation needs (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1999), as well as enjoyment needs (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007), travel partner needs, personal interest needs (Wong and Liu, 2011). Moreover, according to Cho and Jang (2008) information can also have hedonic and sensation seeking value.

5.4 The value dimensions of guidebooks

In light of the data presented above, when talking about guidebooks it does seem appropriate to speak of value and not just of needs, since travellers rely greatly on smartphones and other ICTs to satisfy their information needs but still value certain elements of the guidebooks, which leads them to choose to use them (albeit always in combination with ICTs). Moreover, it is impossible to speak of information needs where the aspects of the guidebook do not concern the search for information. When such aspects relate to a certain value that consumer attribute to the guidebook as an object of consumption, an explanation can be provided through the concept of value. The most evident result that emerges from the data is that, within the use of guidebooks, excellence and efficiency types of value are the most frequent. However, the fact that these value types appear within the use of guidebooks means that the choice of the guidebook as an information source has already been made when these evaluations take place. What the data shows is that the reasons why people choose to use guidebooks in the first place do not lie entirely in its utilitarian value. In fact, most respondents did not appear to believe that the guidebook is a necessary object for travelling unless ICTs are not available for some reason. Therefore, the claim that functional needs are the main reason why travellers decide to use guidebooks (Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2006; Nishimura, Waryszak and King, 2007; Tsang, Chan, Ho, 2011), might not hold up in light of the information technologies revolution (Castells, 2009).

In order to identify what types of value are associated with guidebooks, four main categories have been extrapolated from the data. The identified categories are: curation (the guidebook as a hub), trustworthiness, physical characteristics, non-functional aspects. The four categories consist of sources of value for the users of guidebooks and the pertinent value types have been associated to each of them. The categories and their properties are presented in the table below (Table 2), together with the value dimensions that are connected to them. The +/- signs in the value column indicate that the specific characteristic may be a source of positive or negative value. The first three categories, curation, trustworthiness, physical characteristics are the most complex and they are constituted of several properties. However, the value types related to them are predominantly those of efficiency and excellence, according to Holbrook's framework. Non-functional aspects are fewer but perhaps richer in types of value.

Table 2. Categories, properties and the values associated.

Categories	Properties	Value types
Curation		Excellence, efficiency, play
	Comprehensiveness	
	Selection	
	Structure	
	Safety	
Trustworthiness		Excellence, efficiency
	Standard or quality	
	Updatedness	(+/-)
	Objectivity	(+/-)
Physical characteristics		Excellence, efficiency, aesthetics
	Tangibility	
	Size and weight	(+/-)
	Cost	(+/-)
Non-functional aspects		Excellence, aesthetics, play, status and esteem
	Innovation	Excellence, aesthetics, play
	Sign	Status and esteem
	Entertainment	Aesthetics, play
	Souvenir	Aesthetics, play, status and esteem

The value type of excellence, which consists in the ability of the consumption object to perform a certain purpose, lies primarily in the ability of the guidebook to guide the tourist and help them in the planning of their trip. Guidebook users recognise this type of value in several of the characteristics of the guidebook. The curation of the guidebook helps travellers reach their purposes of visiting and enjoying a destination through the comprehensiveness of the information provided. Trustworthiness is a source of excellence value because a trustworthy source of

information helps the user reach their purpose in using it, which is obtaining information that can be trusted. The lack of up to date information, however, is often a source of negative value in the sense that the information provided by the guidebook cannot be trusted to be valid at the moment of use and therefore it hinders the reaching of the purpose. The perceived objectivity of the guidebook, or lack thereof, can be the source of either positive or negative excellence value, because the point of view of the writer may be valued as contributing to fulfil the purpose of the guidebook or to hinder it (for example, when it is considered to give a too partial or limited view of the reality it describes). The very tangible nature of the guidebook is taken into consideration during the purchase, specifically for what concerns the contents of the guidebooks (for example, maps), as well as the familiar structure that entails an easier use. The fact that the guidebook is considered reliable defines excellence value in a relative way: the purpose that it is able to perform is defined negatively as not running out of battery or stop functioning. It is very clear in this specific characteristic that the value in this case has a contextual, preferential and relativistic nature. In fact, most respondents said to value the guidebook's reliability in the context of internet use: the guidebook is considered reliable in comparison to digital ICTs, it is reliable when and if other (digital) source of information fail. Excellence can also be seen in less functional aspects, like in the possibility to interact and personalise the guidebook: being able to mark or write in the book clearly makes its use easier for the respondents, thus contributing to the fulfilment of the object's purpose. It seems forced to include the safety element within excellence value, although Holbrook's framework does not offer a better category. Safety appears in travel information search theory, specifically in Wong and Liu's (2011) "security needs".

The value type of efficiency consists in the ratio between the inputs and the outputs of the consumption experience. In the use of guidebooks, the inputs can be economic (the price paid), physical (going to buy a guidebook, carrying it) or cognitive (searching for information). The output consists in the planning or improvement of the trip. The considerations that the interviewees made on the worthwhileness of guidebooks, were the result of an evaluation, which is how value is conceived in Woodruff's (1997) view. At play in this case is the value type of efficiency because the user is considering whether the cost of a guidebook (represented by price, weight and size) is worth the outcome (planning, not missing out on things to see). This aspect is strongly connected to the issue of costs related to external information search, which is considered to be one of the determinants of information search behaviour (Gursoy and McCleary, 2004). Moreover, efficiency value lies in the curation of the guidebook as well. In fact, the comprehensiveness of the guidebook does not only help travellers reach their purposes (visiting and enjoying a destination), but it does so in an efficient way, where the inputs they need to put

into the search for information (cognitive effort, time) are smaller than the inputs they would need if they were solely relying on ICTs. Efficiency is also involved in trustworthiness and updatedness in that, by not having to double check sources, users will make a smaller effort and therefore the input/output ratio will be more advantageous than when using the internet. In these cases, too, the value is clearly relativistic.

Aesthetic value can be found in certain tangible elements of the guidebook, such as pictures and layout, that are independent from their use and purpose, on the basis of which the choice to buy a guidebook is sometimes made. Aesthetic value is particularly relevant in the non-functional aspects, like the ability to become a souvenir after the trip or to be a source of inspiration in bookstores. In this case, aesthetic value lies in the possibility to display and admire the book as a mere decorative element after the trip or in the fact that people enjoy looking at guidebooks to “dream” and be inspired. Moreover, aesthetic value appears also regarding the ability to personalise the guidebook, in that having this personalised object was prized in itself. For example, the comments that the respondents said they would write in the guidebook would not just be of a utilitarian nature (for example, as a memo of a good place they had visited), but also of a more hedonic one (for example, just to remember that they had been to a certain place).

Play value also appears in the interviewees’ answers. In the non-functional aspects, play value was displayed in the sense that personalising the book as well as lending it to others was seen as an enjoyable thing to do. Mainly, play value can be recognised in the ability of the guidebook to be a source of entertainment. For example, in the social element, where people can exchange information or plan together, as well as in the fantasising or inspiration part when they look at guidebooks in the store. Learning is also seen as play in this case, which shows how this value is strongly contextual. The guidebook as a souvenir can be a source of play value for those who enjoy collecting guidebooks. The curation of the guidebook can be a source of play value in connection to its ability to satisfy innovation needs by suggesting tips and gems about the destination.

Both status and esteem value can appear in the consumption of an object like the guidebook. On one hand there is the active aspect, where the book is bought, used and later displayed to “show off” or generally represent a certain part of one’s lifestyle in the eyes of others (status). On the other hand, the more passive aspect is also present, in which the object is in itself appreciated for its ability to show all the places one has been to. In fact, the respondents also claimed to like it when they see guidebooks in someone else’s home. Aesthetic value plays a role in this too. Status and esteem also appear in the interpretation of the guidebook as a souvenir, in the sense that the object of consumption represents both a tool to convey a certain image of the owner (status) and

an object that represents a certain lifestyle and therefore contributes to building the owner's reputation (esteem).

Values of spirituality and ethics did not appear in the sense explained by Holbrook, however two orders of considerations can be made in this regard. One of the respondents, Donatella, said that she associated travelling with a guidebook to a "more spiritual" type of travel, which goes beyond technologies and reminds her of her parents' way of travelling. Other respondents, for example Alastair, also mentioned how they would like to switch off their devices during travel. Although Donatella's type of spirituality and Alastair's wish to disconnect do not have any religious or existential connotations, they are however associations that they made between the guidebook and the spirit of travel as detachment from the everyday reality. Although it would be a stretch to claim that using a guidebook has spiritual value, such a claim can be made about travel in general, and the guidebook is an element of it. The same type of reflection can be made about a certain "deontology" of travel, which can be related to Holbrook's ethic value, although not in the sense intended by the author. In this case, the value refers to an idea of what travel should be like, but it has no other-oriented purpose like ethic value has. All the respondents made some remarks on using or not using a guidebook, as well as which type of guidebook is best, in connection to their own idea of what travel is supposed to be. For them, this went from relaxation, to fun, to learning or experiencing everything there is to experience in a place and not missing out. In this, a certain very personal and self-oriented "deontology" of travel could be recognised.

From the analysis, it is clear that Holbrook's definition of value as an interactive, relativistic, preference experience is a useful tool to explain the value of guidebooks. In fact, the different value types associated with guidebooks only come into existence through an *interaction* with the object, either before, during or after the trip. The guidebook is used to gather information, flicked through, carried around, kept, displayed, etc. The value of guidebooks is not something that exists independently from its relationship with the subject. Value is also relativistic because it is not an absolute concept but it is always *related* to something else. Interviewees constantly compared guidebooks to other sources, in particular online ones. Moreover, the value differs from person to person. For example, where Alastair considered the perceived subjectivity of the guidebook a good thing, Milena thought it was not. Clearly, the value of guidebooks is also situational because it depends on the situation in which the evaluation is made: the usefulness of a guidebook is greater where ICTs are not available or the destination is not well connected, for example. The data also shows how guidebooks are not just valued, but they are *preferred* to something else. For example, the lower cognitive cost of using a guidebook is preferred to the effort made by using online resources. Lastly, value does not reside in the guidebook or the user, but in the *experience* of

consumption, that is, in the use of the guidebook both for the purpose of finding information and for other non-functional purposes, such as keeping it as a souvenir or looking at it in the bookstore and fantasising about future trips.

While Holbrook's typology is a useful tool for the analysis of the value of guidebooks, his categorisation into intrinsic/extrinsic, active/reactive, self-oriented/other-oriented is of scarce applicability. Firstly, little can be added to the understanding of the subject through such a categorisation. Secondly, while for some of the value types the distinction is rather straightforward, in other cases the categories overlap or are blurry. The aesthetics value of the guidebook, for example, is clearly self-oriented, intrinsic and reactive. In fact, the value of displaying the guidebook as decoration, for instance, resides in the consumption experience itself (*intrinsic*) and it does not require any active use or manipulation of the object by the user (*reactive*). It is *self-oriented* because it is appreciated for the user's own sake. In the case of excellence, while it is understandable why Holbrook would define it self-oriented and extrinsic, because the book is appreciated for the user's own sake and the value resides in the use of the object, it is harder to understand why it is reactive. In fact, excellence value is defined as the appreciation of an object for its ability to accomplish some goal or perform a function. In order to be reactive, such an appreciation should be independent from the actual use of the guidebook to perform such function. On the other hand, by being extrinsic, the value is necessarily connected to the use of the object. Moreover, the distinction between efficiency and excellence value lies in the very difference between active and reactive. In which ways efficiency is active and excellence is reactive, however, is hard to determine. Considering these difficulties in applying the concepts just described, and the fact that even when it is possible, they add little to the explanation of guidebooks' value, this specific aspect of Holbrook's typology has been left out from the analysis.

6. Concluding discussion

The results of the present research allow to reach the aim of contextualising the role of guidebooks in modern digitalised society through the investigation of its uses as well as the value dimensions that lie at the basis of the consumers' choice of guidebooks as a source of information. Considering the context in which such a study has been conducted, which is a context of fast change but also one in which the effects of the information technology revolution start to be visible and stable, the results suggest that the questions that had been formulated are indeed of importance. Their answers will be able to explain some of the ways in which society is changing. In fact, the changing role of an object of common use and the ways in which its use is valued can give precious insights

on how society is changing in general. The three research questions will be now answered separately.

The first research question of why guidebooks are used can be answered as follows. People do not feel like they need to use guidebooks for their trips most of the time, but they appreciate having one. The choice of using guidebooks is not entirely strategic. The only strategic considerations that people make when deciding whether to get a guidebook or not are the distance of the destination, the quality of the technology they will use during the trip and the connectedness of the place. If none of these considerations are made, the decision to use a guidebook or to not use it is rather serendipitous. The availability of valid alternatives for travel information search leads people to not think actively of which sources they could use, and therefore they do not think of guidebooks. In particular, the omnipresence of multifunctional devices such as smartphones, which are somehow similar to books in their physical appearance, makes guidebooks superfluous. Cost, size and weight of the book also have a negative influence on the choice of using guidebooks when alternative sources of information are available.

The second research question of how guidebooks are used in contemporary tourism practice has been answered with the “sandwich strategy” model. In fact, once the choice has been made to use a guidebook, its use is indeed strategic. The model uses the visual representation of a sandwich to illustrate the logical and chronological order in which information sources are used when the guidebook is one of them. First, online sources and word of mouth, including e-WOM, are used to decide the destination, length of the trip, transportation and often accommodation (top bun); then the guidebook is used to get an overview of the destination and form a day-to-day itinerary that is not too specific (filling of the sandwich); lastly, internet and word of mouth are used again to search for more details on the itinerary and to get practical information (bottom bun). Other sources are used too (such as brochures or documentaries) but they do not appear to have a specific place in the planning process, therefore they are represented by the sides (salad and cheese) in the model. Moreover, the guidebook is used as a hub of information, which can help users navigate the complex hypertextual system that is the internet and which can redirect them to other sources. The uses of guidebooks, however, are not only functional. In fact, non-functional uses can be recognised in their ability to be a source of entertainment, a symbolic expression of tourist identity and a souvenir.

The third research question, regarding the perception of the value of guidebooks, can be answered in the following way. The value of the guidebook is perceived as an interactive, relativistic preference experience, in accordance with Holbrook’s (1999) definition. The value of guidebooks

lies in the interaction between the user and the object, because value does not exist independently from the ways in which the book is used, which can be either as a source of information or for other non-functional uses. In this sense, value is an interactive experience. The value of guidebooks emerges particularly in relation to their digital alternative, therefore being relativistic and preferential. The value types associated with the guidebook are efficiency, excellence, aesthetics, play, esteem and status. Each type is associated with several characteristics of the guidebook as an object of consumption. However, Holbrook's categorisation into intrinsic/extrinsic, active/reactive, self-oriented/other-oriented turned out to be of scarce applicability.

The present research contributes to the topic of guidebooks as a field of study, as well as to the theories of information search behaviour and consumer value. Within the field of guidebooks use, the present research offers an alternative view of the guidebook, which is not just a source of information for travellers, but it represents an object of consumption that has a role and a value that go beyond its functional purpose of providing information. Within the discussion on information search behaviour, the study does not only contribute to the understanding of how a traditional source like the guidebook is used and for what purposes, but it also clarifies the reasons why people chose or do not chose to use it. The context of the information technology revolution makes the findings relevant in contemporary society and offers insights on how such a revolution is changing the ways in which people behave and think. In fact, the relevance of the value that is attributed to the guidebook is not limited to the field of guidebooks use, but it can reflect what people find important in the travel experience in general. In turn, tourism is a form of social behaviour and therefore its study can give insights on society in general.

The study also presents several limitations, both in the methodology and in the merits of the results. Firstly, employing a qualitative method means that the results cannot be generalised beyond the subjects studied. The sampling strategy used here has limited the transferability of the results only to the so-called "generation Y", but greater insights into the subject would be gained by carrying out a trans-generational analysis of the use of guidebooks. The study is limited to those people who do use guidebooks, and it did not consider the perceptions and opinions of those who do not use guidebooks at all. Interesting results could be reached through such an analysis. Moreover, since the sample was selected on a voluntary basis, it provides no insights on gender differences in the use of guidebooks in general, which had been instead suggested by previous research. A possible link between the safety needs of guidebooks users and gender has been suggested in the present research and it could be further investigated. A random sampling strategy would be useful to understand more about this. Future research could take into considerations factors such as culture, nationality or education, which previous literature identifies as influences

over the use of guidebooks. A quantitative approach to a possible future study would allow for a clearer understanding of the correlations between the various concepts that have emerged from the present work.

Further studies could use the present research to make a comparison and understand how values and uses of the guidebook change through time. Contributions such as the sandwich model should be further tested, possibly through a quantitative method, to ensure their soundness. Moreover, the research has focused on one specific source of information and its role within the information technology revolution, however several other sources are available to tourists when they are searching for travel information and they should be taken into consideration to get a fuller picture of the information search behaviour of travellers, which was outside of the scope of the present research. Consumer value theory turned out to be a useful tool to understand the reasons behind the use of guidebooks, but it only represents one theoretical approach to the wider field of consumer behaviour. The same data could provide interesting results if analysed through other theories.

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Appendix

Appendix 1.

Interview Protocol

Brief introduction of the topic of the research

The thesis is about the use of travel guidebooks and, in particular, it focuses on exploring what makes guidebooks valuable to those who use them and how they can still be considered valuable in a digital era like ours. I am interested in talking to people born between the 1980s and 1990s who use or have used travel guidebooks, even if they don't do so anymore.

Introductory questions.

(Purpose: establishing rapport/getting to know each other/getting the interviewee thinking about travel experiences.)

- Do you travel a lot?
- How do you like to travel and why? (organised trip/independent)
- Who do you like to travel with and why?
- What has been your most memorable travel experience and why?

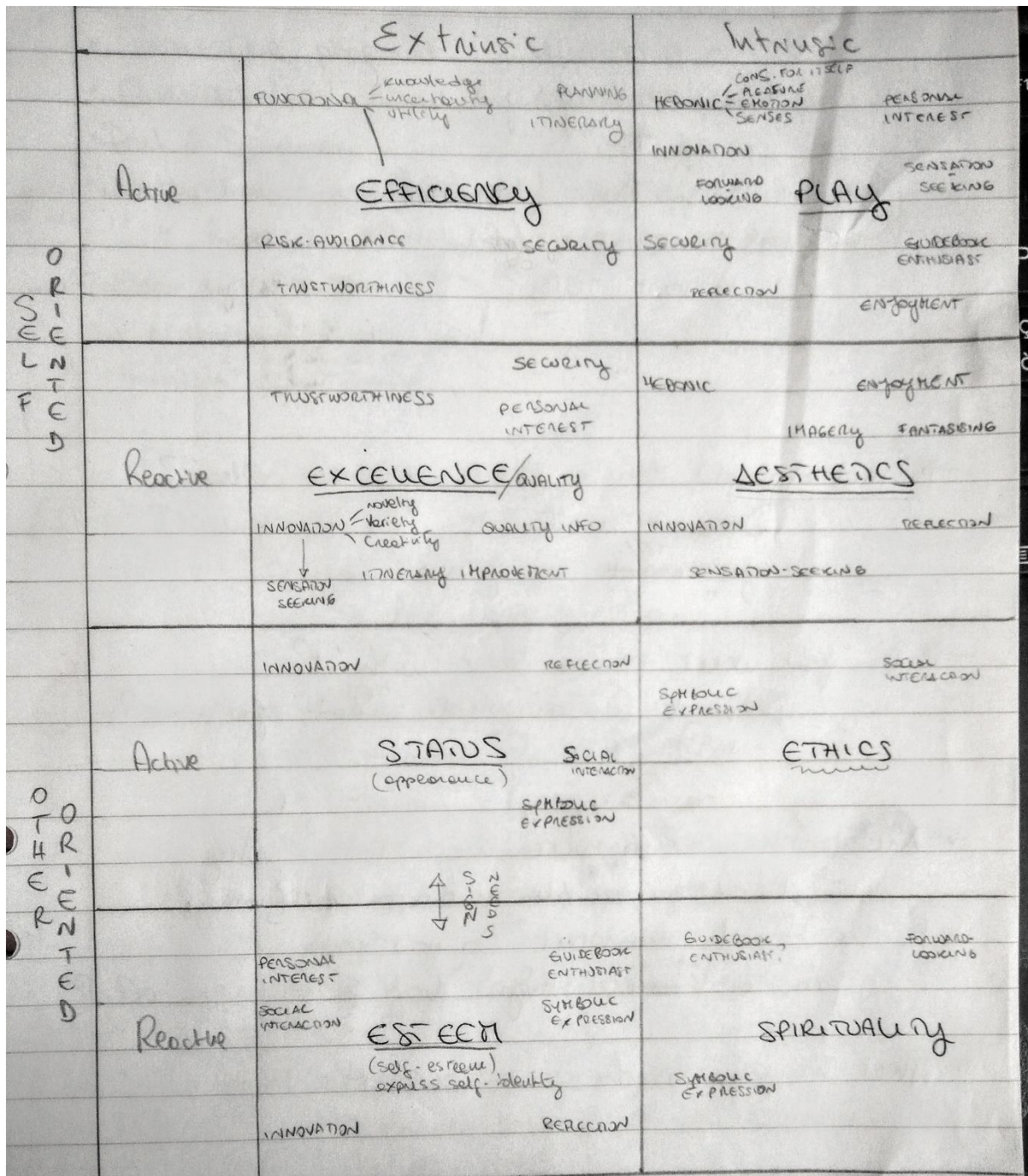
Travel guidebooks

- Do you use TGBs? How much?
 - o Does it depend on the type of trip?
 - o Does it depend on the company?
 - o Do you ever use them when you're not travelling?
- What is the main reason why you use TGBs?
 - o What are other reasons?
- What TGB did you use in your last trip? Why did you choose that? Did you like it?
- Do you like travel guidebooks?
 - o What do you like about them?
- Are pictures important in a TGB? Why
- Is the graphic/design important? Why
- Do you have a favourite brand? Why
- If you travel with partner/s, who buys the guide? Is there a reason? Who keeps it?
- How do you use them/what other sources do you use?
 - o Destination choice? (pre-stage)
 - o Itinerary? (pre-/during stage)
 - o How do you use them during the trip?
 - o How do you use them after the trip?
- When you travel locally, where do you find information?

- Have you ever bought/used a guidebook for a local trip?
- Do you think the TGB is an authoritative source of information?
 - If you had gotten the same info from the internet, how would it have been different?
- Do you think you could or would travel without a guidebook?
 - Yes: how would you replace it? Is there something that you think could not be replaced?
 - No: what do you think could not be replaced?
- For users: do you think you would miss something a TGB if you didn't use it?
- For ex-users: is there something you miss about using TGB?
- Where do you find inspiration for your trips?
 - Do you ever feel inspired by TGBs?
- What happens to the TGB after the trip is over?
- What do you think when you see someone else with a TGB?
 - Does it matter what TGB they have (publisher)?
- Do you want to be seen with a TGB?
 - Does it matter what TGB you have (publisher)?
- Would you say you feel more adventurous/free when you have a TGB or when you find info online? Why
- How do you choose what TGB to buy?
- Where do you buy it?
- What do you do when you walk into the bookstore?
- Do you ever stop by the guidebook section even if you're not travelling? Why?
 - If so, what do you do there?

Appendix 2

Grid of Holbrook's value typology.



Appendix 3

Public posts on Facebook groups

Hello everybody! Who likes travelling and would like to have a chat with me? I am a Master student at Lund University (Sweden) and I am currently researching the use of travel guidebooks for my thesis. I need as many people as possible for a little interview about the topic (just a casual chat in front of a nice cup of coffee, nothing formal!). If you were born in the 1980s and 1990s and you think you would like to talk with me about why you use travel guidebooks when you travel (or why you don't), send me a pm or comment here and I will contact you :) Thanks in advance to anyone who will respond!

Hello everyone! I need some guys to help me out with my thesis. I am currently studying Service Management at Campus Helsingborg and writing my Master's thesis. I need a few MEN (sorry, girls!) for an interview about the topic of travel guidebooks (just a casual chat in front of a nice cup of coffee, nothing formal!). If you think you would like to talk with me about why you use travel guidebooks when you travel (or why you don't), send me a pm or comment here and I will contact you 😊 :) Thanks in advance!

Appendix 4

Message sent to the volunteers

Hello! I am writing about the interview for my thesis. First, I would like to thank you again for offering to participate in my project. The thesis is about the use of travel guidebooks and, in particular, it focuses on exploring what makes guidebooks valuable to those who use them and how they can still be considered valuable in a digital era like ours. The interview will consist of an informal chat about the topic and it will be recorded but you will be kept completely anonymous and I will delete the recording after completing my thesis if you wish. I am mostly interested in what you have to say about it (although I will have some questions ready to start the conversation!). I am now in the process of scheduling interviews and I will come to Copenhagen several times during the next couple of weeks to meet with interviewees. In order to make a schedule, it would be nice if you could give me three (time and date) options to meet between the 20th and 30th of March (weekends included). I do not know yet where the interview will be held as I need to find a quiet place (that serves coffee, possibly :P). Actually, if you have any suggestions for a quiet place where we can sit and talk, it would be very much appreciated (I was thinking the library or a university, although I have no idea how crowded they are during the day). One last thing, it would be nice if you could bring one of your travel guidebooks with you when we meet: it can be your favourite, the last one you used, just one you own or one that you would like to show me for any reason. I am really looking forward to hearing from you about this and finding out what you think about travel guidebooks! ☺