Contested authenticity in Zimbabwean tourist eatertainment

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Contested Authenticity in Zimbabwean Tourist Eatertainment

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Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University’s rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

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PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THIS THESIS

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Abstract

Notwithstanding various criticisms, the subject of authenticity has created a continuous flow of debate among tourism scholars since Dean MacCannell put forward his theory of “staged authenticity” in the early 1970s. The dominant conception of the phenomenon of authenticity in tourism scholarship has tended to remain Western-centric, utilising a “modern-man-in-general” approach which sees tourists as searching for an “authentic Other”. Tourists are assumed to be Western while the non-Western is typically the “touree”. The present thesis destabilises this status quo, addressing in part the lacuna in knowledge created by tourism scholarship’s tendency to overlook the Indigenous African voice, and to continue representing Indigenous Africans as “touree” rather than as tourist. Drawing upon hermeneutic phenomenology, I combine virtual and traditional qualitative techniques to examine the contestation of authenticity in the context of cultural experiences (“eatertainment”) provided for tourists, both Indigenous African and Western, at a number of restaurants operating at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation, in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were employed in addition to a “netnographic” approach in which over 600 online reviews of tourists’ experiences of the restaurants under study were subject to thematic analysis.

The focus of the study covers both object and existential authenticity. In relation to the role and importance of object-related authenticity, several attitudinal and behavioural differences were noted between African and Western tourists. Object authenticity appeared to be more important to Western tourists than to Indigenous African tourists. It was of particular significance that, for the majority of Indigenous African tourists, the subject of authenticity appeared to be a foreign and perplexing subject. Also, Indigenous African tourists viewed the local cultural performances as primarily serving an entertainment purpose, rather than as a form of cultural representation. This view contrasted sharply with that of most Western tourists, who, particularly in their online reviews of the entertainment provided at the restaurants, evaluated the experience explicitly in (object) authenticity terms. Further, while...
Western tourists were more prone to “Othering” (viewing their hosts in terms of difference rather than similarity), Indigenous African tourists’ behaviours and attitudes were mediated by the longstanding African value of Ubuntu, which focuses on “oneness” and approaching each other on the basis of our common humanity, rather than difference. Even more interestingly, and indicating the preoccupation with object authenticity, a substantial proportion of Western tourists went out of their way to expose possible deceit and to attempt to verify the authenticity claims of certain elements of the cultural eatertainment experiences in which they engaged. This finding suggests that (Western) tourists are not as naive or as gullible as they have been portrayed previously. African tourists, on the other hand, were less wary of possible deceit within staged cultural experiences.

The differences observed between Western and non-Western tourists call into question the validity of non-context-specific claims about the search for authenticity in tourism, while building the case for (socio-culturally) situated theory. Beyond object authenticity, I also discuss the relevant authentication processes, employing the categories of “hot” and “cool” authentication to help illustrate and explain these processes. I show that cool authentication, in the context of the study, occurs much less frequently than “hot” authentication, and I provide explanations for this observation.

With regard to existential authenticity, I examine how eatertainers make use of liminal space to create a euphoric embodied experience in which everyday behavioural norms are temporarily set aside. In the case of African tourists, I also illustrate the ways in which the traditional philosophical value systems of Ubuntu, Hlonipha, and Isithunzi mediate both the experience and expression of interpersonal and intrapersonal existential authenticity. These values, I suggest, could be seen as part of African tourists’ behavioural repertoire in tourism spheres. I also examine, through the lens of these worldviews, the issues of “face”, dignity, and the Self, as discernible only in relationships, within fundamental African thinking. By opening a discussion of African worldviews, I provide a new avenue of inquiry in culturally situated studies of touristic experience, exploring the importance of embodied experience, performativity, self-identity, self-realization, and living in accord with
one’s sense of self, as reflected in tourist narratives. In sum, by representing both Indigenous African and Western voices, the thesis provides a comprehensive and critical analysis of a multidimensional concept which lies at the centre of touristic quest theorising.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The subject of authenticity has been widely debated by tourism scholars since Dean MacCannell (1973, 1976) introduced it to tourism theory (Alonso, O'Neill, & Kim, 2010; Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008; Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher; Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; MacCannell, 1971, 1973; Wang, 1999; White, 2007; Xie & Wall, 2002; Xie, 2003a). MacCannell (1973, 1976) argues, in his “staged authenticity” thesis, that moderns experience anxiety in response to the emptiness and meaninglessness of their lives. In MacCannell’s view, tourism becomes, for moderns, a means to escape from the mundanity of contemporary lifestyles in search of an authentic Other, in other places and other times (Chambers, 2009; Chhabra, 2005; Cohen, 2002; Cole, 2007; Condevaux, 2009; Yang, 2011; Zeppel, 1995). MacCannell’s authenticity theory is therefore grounded in a critique of modernity. However, he argued, tourists’ quests for authenticity are destined to end in frustration as all they have access to is a staged version of the authentic.

Drawing from Goffman’s (1959) front and back stages, MacCannell proposes that commercial tourism suppliers contrive inauthentic representations of their culture in an effort to earn quick money from gullible tourists in front stages (the space in which tourists are catered for). Genuine culture in the back stage, for him, is kept hidden from tourists. Therefore tourists’ only hope of experiencing authenticity lies in their ability to penetrate back regions. In time though, he opines, even these back regions become staged, in a perpetual tourist deception project by locals and tourism brokers. It is clear then that MacCannell’s staged authenticity theory is informed by realist/objectivist reasoning, where true authenticity is seen as “out there” to be discovered. It is for him a fixed reality; a quality that can exist independent of humans’ subjective perceptions. Thus, in his view, if tourists have the means, or are cunning enough, they can uncover the true authenticity of places and peoples they tour in the back stages.
MacCannell’s work has subsequently been criticised by many tourism scholars. One of his critics, Erik Cohen, criticises the staged authenticity theory, suggesting instead a constructionist perspective, which sees authenticity as socially constructed, and therefore emergent, negotiable, and mutable (Cohen, 1979, 1988, 1993, 2002, 2007a, 2007b, 2010). Cohen argues that authenticity is not a fixed attribute within a toured culture; rather, he sees authenticity as a perception that is shaped by various socio-temporal factors. Cohen also stresses that tourists differ in their motivations individually; that the tourist does not exist “as a type” (1979, p. 180). For instance, he argues, there are recreationary tourists, whose quest in tourism is for entertainment, rather than a deliberate search for authenticity.

In spite of such criticism, however, the predominant conception of the phenomenon of authenticity in tourism scholarship has remained a Western-centric, “modern-man-in-general” approach which sees tourists as searching for an “authentic Other”. Thus most extant discourses of authenticity can be viewed as drawing from MacCannell’s ideas (Jones, 2010; MacCannell, 1973, 1976). Hall (2007, p. 1139) even goes so far as suggesting that the search for authenticity is inherent to modern society, as “in traditional societies there are no disputes about origins”. Further, as Nyiri (2006) argues, most tourism social science generally makes universal theoretical claims in which the non-Western is the “touree” who is subject to the consequences of a culture commodification process. Tourism theory continues to rely heavily on an “endless process of Othering to which the continent [of Africa] has been subjected” (Hitchcott, 2009, p. 158). Such theory has been formed from an acceptance of the European- normative discourse which constructs the Other as a negation of its normativity (Musila, 2008).

It has also been argued that even postcolonial tourism theory has tended to interpellate the non-Western cultures it seeks to foreground into a Eurocentric frame of thinking (Osagie & Buzinde, 2011). Nyiri (2006), for example, contends that the modern-man-in-general approach is really an embodiment of modernity in Western society and asserts that there is no basis for assuming that the Western notion of authenticity is generalisable to other cultures. This critique is also echoed by Cole (2007) who also asserts that authenticity is a Euro-centric concept which fails to
recognise the interplay between culture and power, as well as the strategic use of tourism by less developed communities, to empower themselves.

This thesis partly addresses the lacuna in knowledge created by tourism scholarship’s tendency to overlook the African voice, and to continue representing Africans as “touree”, yet increasingly they have also taken on the role of tourist. Studies taking the “African as tourer” perspective (that is, representing the Indigenous African as “tourist”), are conspicuous by their absence. This view is expressed concisely by Hitchcott’s (2009, p. 149)’s assertion that “the traveller is generally assumed to be white, Western and male”. Similarly, McRae (2003) argues that MacCannell privileges the tourist’s power to look, with the “native” relegated to colonized object. In other words, in the majority of tourism texts, Africans tend to represent the object, not the subject, of the tourist gaze, and they are stereotyped as epitomising the “authentic exotic Other” (Hitchcott, 2009). Thus, according to Musila (2008), Europe has appropriated the tourist gaze and the ability to know the Other, and assumed that the Other cannot return the gaze.

Indeed, an African perspective on most grand tourism theories, authenticity included, is at worst, missing, and at best, underrepresented. Very little page space is afforded to African tourism research that includes the African “voice”. Osagie & Buzinde (2011, p. 211) sum up this assertion, thus:

Indeed, tourism scholarship has been pertinent, relevant, necessary and sympathetic to the oppressed; it has nonetheless been framed from the perspective of the, often removed, Western researcher and thus does not take into account the local issues as articulated, lived, and dealt with by the locals.

Further, they argue, although tourism research has created awareness of postcolonial issues, often it has done so without meaningfully involving the Other as voiced—what Spivak (1988) has termed “epistemic violence”. Postcolonial theory in this context refers to a modern, and for some, postmodern discourse, which consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the political, cultural, social, and economic legacy of the colonial project (Aitchison, 2001; Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011; Amoamo & Thompson, 2010; Burton, 2006; Caton & Santos, 2009; Echtner & Prasad, 2003;
Glynn & Tyson, 2007; Hazbun, 2009; Klug, 2003). Spivak (1988) uses the term “epistemic violence” to refer to the disempowerment of formerly colonised peoples in the creation of knowledge about them. The result has been that the agency of the non-Western Other remains suspended and unresolved (Majid, 2001; Osagie & Buzinde, 2011). The African remains in a muted, subaltern, or marginal position in the hegemony of the gaze. Thus the question: “Will the subaltern be allowed to speak?” remains unanswered in tourism theory. This argument of the muted African or “native” voice is also put forward by Hitchcott (2009, p. 158):

In the classic African travel narrative, the ‘natives’ do not speak but are rather represented by the lone white male adventurer as the silent savage Other. If African voices are ever heard, they are...‘ventriloquised’ by white authors.

Hitchcott asserts the need for alternative epistemes and argues that anthropological works in which outsiders speak for or “ventriloquise” locals are redundant; that Indigenous people in all parts of the world must be allowed to speak for themselves. Too often, academe has produced an episteme of “attempted imposition” which “functions by rendering invisible the point of view of the native” (Royle, 2010, p. 205). Echoing this sentiment, Chakrabarty (1992) also argues that Europe is often accepted as the “silent referent” in the creation of knowledge about the Other. The result has been that traditional theorising of the African Other is ridden with Western stereotypes (Musila, 2008).

As a number of authors argue, there is also a discernible tendency in tourism scholarship concerning authenticity to treat tourists as a homogeneous population (Chhabra, 2010; Cohen, 1988, 1993, 2002, 2007a, 2010; Waitt, 2000), with the result that nuances which arise from variations in age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and education, for instance, are overlooked. Therefore, as tourism research takes a critical turn which shifts discourses beyond the traditional applied business approach, adding culture specific critique to grand “universal” theory is overdue (Osagie & Buzinde, 2011). There is a need for future scholarship in tourism to recognise hybridity and ambiguity of touristic space in order to locate and dislocate
grand narratives, and to engage with the perspectives of (formerly) colonised Others (Dixon et al., 2010; Osagie & Buzinde, 2011). The West has read “native cosmologies predominantly through Eurocentric lenses”, which mostly dismissed them as inferior and irrational beings, without understanding the “logics underpinning their world views”, although critical inquiry seems to be taking a more empathetic approach, by highlighting the hegemonic appropriation of power by the West (Musila, 2008, p. 117).

Beyond the epistemic violence of the lack of an African voice on authenticity, there is also a notable scarcity of studies which address an area equally pertinent to the examination of authenticity seeking: the political issues of “authentication” (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). Indeed, Ryan (1997, 2003) argues that in the example of showcases of Indigenous Maori cultures for tourism, the central issue is not authenticity, but rather, who authorises performances. Within this view, the question becomes, beyond “authenticity perceptions”, what and who authenticates?; or, expressed alternatively, who or what holds cultural authority? Zhu (2012) concurs that understanding the underlying politics, or locating who has the power to authenticate is crucial. For Ryan (2003), these questions are more meaningful than simply asking whether a cultural performance is “authentic”. Similarly, Wall and Xie (2005) write:

...rather than seeking to define the authentic, it is more appropriate and useful to ask, “Who authenticates?” Answers to this question involve the identification of key players (stakeholders) and the criteria that they employ for making their assessments of authenticity. It ultimately involves addressing issues of power and authority. Nevertheless, the attribution of authenticity is important because it involves the conferment of status.

Rickly-Boyd (2012) also shares this sentiment, arguing that the crucial questions to be answered also include “who needs authenticity and why?”, and, “how has authenticity been used?” These questions are complex and multidimensional, in part because power and culture are also multifaceted phenomena (Appadurai, 1986; Cole, 2007); they are related to the politics of developmental planning, cultural
nationalism, ethnicity, identity, legitimacy, belonging, and interpretation of cultural heritage in tourism (Davis & Morais, 2004; Gotham, 2007; Green, 2007; Jamal & Hill, 2004; Mantecon & Huete, 2008; Nasser, 2003). Too many studies take a singular approach, leading to a largely univocal discourse which mutes others, and more specifically, Others. This is a pitfall I attempt to evade by formulating a multivocal design which voices both Westerners and African Others.

The epistemic gaps highlighted above are, however, not too surprising, as tourism scholarship in Africa is under-developed, and funding for research and publication is relatively inadequate (Horton, 2000). For example, universities in Zimbabwe only launched tourism degrees at Honours level and higher in the last two decades. However, in recent years, there have been notable developments towards strengthening tourism research and educational capacities in Africa. In particular, as Van Der Duim (2011) reports, in 2000 the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) founded an African chapter at its inaugural conference in Mombasa, Kenya. There have been several subsequent conferences focusing on tourism in Africa, a development which Van Der Duim expects to strengthen tourism scholarship in Africa. As a further example of this trend in tourism research focusing on Africa, in 2011, *Tourism Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, published a special issue entitled “State of Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa”. However, overall, compared to tourism scholarship in the West, Africa lags well behind in research output, particularly that which is underpinned by critical social science.

1.2 The Ethno-Cultural Context of the Study

Prior to the 2000s, Zimbabwe was among the most competitive tourism destinations in Africa, with tourism as the one of largest earners of foreign exchange (Turton & Mutambirwa, 1996). However, in the last decade, the country’s tourism industry has suffered from the aftermath of the highly politicised and controversial Land Redistribution Programme (Mkono, 2010c; Sender & Johnston). The resulting political and economic landscape has been one of very low hotel occupancies, as well as safety concerns among tourists. Victoria Falls, being at the centre of
Zimbabwe’s tourism supply, has not been spared by these macropolitical and economic forces (Mkono, 2010c). I return to a more detailed discussion of the economic and political context of Zimbabwean tourism later in this thesis.

While the tourism industry continues to struggle, many tourism enterprises in Victoria Falls continue to thrive on selling “ethnic” culture to tourists, a trend which is growing given the increased profile of cultural tourism in national tourism planning. However ethnicity and cultural authority are highly contested phenomena in Zimbabwean society (Levinson, 1998). Zimbabwe is a culturally diverse country, comprising more than twenty ethnic groups. The Indigenous tribes represent over 97% of the population. The remainder consists of people of European ancestry (chiefly English, German, Afrikaaner, Dutch) mixed races (chiefly African-European), and Asians. Shona tribes (Karanga, Korekore, Manyika, Zezuru, Rozvi, among others) and Ndebele tribes (examples are Xosa, Zulu, Swati) account for at least 87% of the population; of that, the Shona represent at least 70%. Other minority ethnicities are Shangani, Nambya, Nyanja, Chewa, Venda, Ndau, Remba, Sena, Kalanga, and Sotho (Asante, 2000; Levinson, 1998; Ranger, 1989).

The town of Victoria Falls, specifically, with its labour intensive tourism industry, is a multi-ethnic area as it attracts employment seekers and entrepreneurs from all the provinces of Zimbabwe. However the Shona, Ndebele, Nambya and Tonga are the dominant tribes. Ethnic tensions, particularly between the Shona and Ndebele, inform the social discourse on questions of Zimbabwean identity and cultural representation (Beach, 1986). Partisan campaigns have frequently highlighted inter-and intra-tribal tensions, and some politicians, to enhance their ascendancy to positions of political power, have manipulated these tensions. Foremen, politicians (including at cabinet level), and public officers have been suspected of “homeboyism” and favouring their own tribalmen in one way or another (Beach, 1994).

Ndebele-Shona tensions date back to the precolonial and colonial periods when there were territorial/chieftaincy conflicts after the Ndebele conquest of part of the Shona territory in the nineteenth century. The Ndebele attitude of superiority that resulted
from the conquest is seen as having sown the seeds of resentment among the Shona (Levinson, 1998). During the liberation wars of the 1960s and 1970s, the Shona and Ndebele formed rival political and military organisations. Although the parties subsequently united, the Shona and Ndebele conflict remained a latent force that continued to surface at different times in the history of Zimbabwe. The other non-Indigenous groups (Europeans, Asians and mixed race) are virtually outside the political system (Levinson, 1998), and do not actively participate in politics of “Zimbabwean identity”. Therefore with reference to the role of ethnicity in tourism and cultural identity, the debate centres on the Indigenous groups.

The irony of cultural representation in tourism, however, is that even with such marked divisions in ethnic groups, there is still a responsibility to present “Zimbabwean” culture, which falls on tourism stakeholders, including the tourism industry and the government. Thus tourism suppliers may refer to a “Zimbabwean experience”, and performers may perform a dance of “our forefathers”, without demarcating exactly of which group of people they are speaking on behalf. But what marks ‘Zimbabwean-ness’? Indeed, as Moscardo (2007) notes, disagreements often arise over what images should be developed and presented to visitors in tourism. In effect, the tourism industry actively constructs and reconstructs “Zimbabwean” cultural identity through its choices in respect of cultural representation.

1.3 The Profile of Cultural Tourism in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe’s tourism appeal, like most destinations in the Southern African region, has, until very recently, been heavily reliant on nature-based tourism (Feldman, 1997; Morrison, 2009). As a result most tourists associate Zimbabwe with safari-type activities (so called “big five” experiences) and other nature-based attractions, in addition to the world renowned Victoria Falls. However, increased concern over the sustainability of nature-based forms of tourism as well as a need to rebrand Zimbabwe as a destination have seen significant attention being directed at the prospects for developing cultural tourism (Manwa, 2007). Tourism expositions have redirected the focus of image marketing from an overemphasis on natural attractions to a more diverse portfolio which includes local cultural attractions.
Demonstrating the changed marketing focus, where in the past, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority’s (the Zimbabwean public sector destination management organisation (DMO)) marketing collateral virtually overlooked the country’s cultural attractions, in recent years there is marked emphasis on increasing awareness of cultural resources. For example, the DMO’s website, (www.zimbabwetourism.net) has created a home page which now features, under “Our Wonders”, referring to the country’s top six attractions, three key cultural ones. These are, “Rich history and heritage”, the “Great Zimbabwe” (stone age, precolonial) ruins, and “Our wonderful people and culture”. The importance of the Great Zimbabwe, for example, conveyed in the webpage is clear:

The Great Zimbabwe, or "stone buildings", is the name given to the twelfth to fifteenth century stone ruins spread out over a 722 hectare (1,784 acre) area within the modern-day country of Zimbabwe, which itself is named after the ruins. It is near the town of Masvingo, which before majority rule was called Fort Victoria. The word "Great" distinguishes the site from the many hundred small ruins, known as Zimbabwees, spread across the Zimbabwe highveld. There are 200 such sites in southern Africa, with monumental, mortarless walls and Great Zimbabwe is the largest.

There are two theories on the origin of the word "Zimbabwe": The first theory holds that the word is derived from Dzimba-dza-mabwe, translated from the Karanga dialect of Shona as "large houses of stone" (dzimba = plural of imba, "house"; mabwe = plural of bwe, "stone"). The Karanga-speaking Shona people are found around Great Zimbabwe in the modern-day province of Masvingo and have been known to have inhabited the region since the building of this ancient city. A second theory is that Zimbabwe is a contracted form of dzimba woye which means...

The attraction portrayed as “Our wonderful people and culture” is described as follows:

Warm, friendly smiling faces, welcoming attitude, helping hands is the Zimbabwe’s hallmark. Hospitality is second nature to us all - the Shona in
the northern regions and the Ndebele in the western parts of the country. Hospitality is inherent complemented by Zimbabwe’s beacon in literacy of the highest standard in the whole of Africa.

Traditional ceremonies and dance performances across the country feature a combination of one or more of the following: the mystical and spiritual mbira, marimba, the African drum, clapping, singing, ululations and uniquely rhythmic body movements. Zimbabwe’s culture is punctuated by a fabric of unique dances and ceremonies ranging from the UNESCO proclaimed Intangible Cultural Heritage Mbende-Jerusarema dance, Isitchikitsha, Muchongoyo, Nyau and Makishi amongst the many genres...

Although the appeal of Victoria Falls as a destination primarily lies in the Falls themselves, the new cultural tourism thrust is also vividly illustrated in various tourism enterprises there, including hotels and lodges. The town boasts around forty hotels and lodges catering to domestic, regional (from within Southern Africa), and international tourists. Most hotels at the destination hire local cultural performance groups to entertain their guests, on a fixed wage basis. Thus restaurants typically package traditional local culture for the consumption of tourists in various forms, including:

- traditional music and dance as entertainment in restaurants;
- sculptures and carvings in curio shops;
- demonstrations of local sculpture and carving on hotel premises;
- hair-braiding demonstrations in restaurants;
- ethnic décor in hotel rooms and other guest areas;
- traditional dress display and sale in curio shops;
- traditional storytelling in restaurants;
- traditional face painting for children;
- local ethnic cuisines in restaurants; and
- local fortune tellers on restaurant premises.

As such, many hotel restaurants in Victoria Falls can be referred to as “historaunts” (Josiam, Mattson, & Sullivan, 2004), to signify that they combine aspects of local
cultural heritage with the dining experience. But while this is happening, as a research field in Zimbabwe, tourism remains in its infancy, so that very little is known about cultural or other forms of tourism in the country.

1.4 Food and “Eatertainment” in Tourism Experiences

The term “eatertainment” was coined by Ritzer (1999), to emphasise the trend towards entertainment as an augmentation of the restaurant offer, beyond the food. In this thesis the term is used in a similar sense, and for convenience, as it is also a compact reference to restaurant entertainment. Li et al. (2011) note that many destinations now use food to strengthen their tourism appeal; that a unique “food identity” can contribute significantly to destination competitiveness. Increasingly, travel agencies customise holiday packages to cater for travellers who value food adventure as an important element of their tourism experience (Molz, 2007). It is understood that food in tourism can offer indulgent, multisensory, and memorable experiences (Everett, 2008). Food can play an important role in a destination brand, because it is often intricately linked with the destination’s social, cultural, and natural characteristics; as such, food carries symbolic meaning. It can be used to convey an image of authentic, embodied consumption that is appealing to modern travellers (Everett, 2008). Food has the ability “to enhance the sustainability and the authenticity of a destination, strengthen the economy of a place and establish the hospitality of a region” (Lin, et al., 2011, p. 32).

Local restaurant, food and beverage outlets and wineries can become intertwined with the destination image perceived by tourists (Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Kneafsey, 2000; Lin, et al., 2011). Food is therefore a powerful vehicle for conveying deep-rooted cultural meanings and emblems (Elmont, 1995; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Lin, et al., 2011; Molz, 2007; Oakes, 1999; Smith & Costello, 2009). It is a transportable symbol of place and cultural identity; a movable Other or sign of Otherness (Molz, 2007). In culinary experiences, therefore, tourists have the opportunity to taste, or to eat, the Other; to eat difference (Aitchison, 2001; Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005; Caton & Santos, 2009; Molz, 2007). Thus, in tourism, according to Molz (2007, p. 78)
...food operates within a symbolic economy that trades on Otherness, the exotic, the strange, difference, and novelty as they are about eating as a material encounter. In this sense, culinary tourism is always relative and what counts as the “Other,” “different,” “exotic,” or “novel” can only be named in relation to what it is ‘Other,” or “different” from. In this sense, culinary tourism is also always specific, depending on who is eating, who is feeding, the cultural context of consumption, and the kinds of power relations that are produced across the table.

Tourists’ satisfaction with a destination is significantly influenced by the food experience it offers. The food bears on the tourist’s perception of local distinctiveness (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Kneafsey, 2000; Lin, et al., 2011). In culinary tourism experiences, consuming unfamiliar foods is seen as an encounter with Otherness (Molz, 2007). Food in tourism also becomes a substitute for actual engagement with locals; it is a way to assert the normality of the tourist’s own culture, and as Molz (2007) puts it, culinary adventures into another culture are less about a sustained engagement with that particular culture than they are about bringing out for tourists a symbolic distinction that raises their status back home. However, while research on the relation between gastronomy and tourism continues to grow, the subject has rarely been explored in African contexts. Therefore, very little is known about the food identities of tourist destinations on this continent.

1.5 Statement of the Research Problem

As argued earlier, most theory on authenticity in tourism is built around a stereotypical Western tourist. Studies in which Indigenous Africans assume the tourist role remain conspicuous by their relative absence. Such a scenario is absurd in that Indigenous Africans have participated in tourism (as tourists) for centuries. The different cultural context in African countries also offers a redefinition of social norms and values which also shape how “tourists” view and contest sociological phenomena such as authenticity.
As a phenomenon that exists in the interface between humans and their social, cultural, political and economic environments, authenticity can only be fully understood when it is discussed in context, and if studies take into account the plurality and possible divergence of priorities among different actors. Given this background, what role do notions of authenticity, understood from the varying perspectives of existing schools of thought, play in African touristic quests, in the context of eatertainment? Further, how do various groups, or authenticity stakeholders, negotiate and contest the authenticity and authentication of cultural objects, and of experiences, offered in Victoria Falls tourist eatertainment space?

1.6 Study Aim

The overall aim of this project is to critically examine the concept of authenticity in the context of tourist eatertainment experiences in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, culminating in a comparison of African and Western touristic quests. Realising that existing research on this topic is predominantly Western ethnocentric, I focus primarily on voicing African tourists (where “African tourists” in this thesis denotes tourists of Indigenous African descent, living in Africa), who have rarely been represented as such in tourism studies, almost always having been cast in the role of hosts. Demarcating “African tourists” in this way is necessary to allow the study to draw from uniquely Indigenous African cultural standpoints, in relation to notions of authenticity.

By engaging with the views of African and Western tourists, and local restaurant performers, I intend to examine how sociocultural, historical, political, economic and other factors mediate the construction of authenticity meaning and significance in tourist experience. True to the “eighth moment” and “critical turn” in qualitative tourism research (Alonso, et al., 2010; Ateljevic, et al., 2005; Denzin, 1978; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 1998; Hollinshead, 2006; Tribe, 2008; Whyte, 1996), my goal in this project is to provide only a localised, “nongrand” tale of the field (Denzin, 1978; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 1998; Hollinshead, 2006). For such a pursuit therefore, the context is of central importance (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; Punch, 1998; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005).
The local theory generated becomes a platform for evaluating the authenticity grand narrative, highlighting the elements which the study findings concur with and especially those it refutes.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the role of object authenticity and authentication in African and Western tourist experiences of Victoria Falls eatertainment.

- To examine the experience and expression of existential authenticity among tourists in Victoria falls eatertainment spaces.

I examine the contestation of authenticity on two levels:

- in the multivocal reporting of authenticity quests, perceptions and experiences, among local entertainers, African tourists, and, Western tourists; and,

- in the examination of authenticity from the viewpoint of various schools of thought, namely the objectivist school, from which arises objective authenticity; the constructivist school, which proposes constructivist authenticity; and, finally, the existentialist school, which advocates existential authenticity.

The contestation of authenticity is thus multilayered and multifaceted. Further, as stated earlier, part of analysing the contestation of authenticity entails examining the processes of authentication (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). All these dimensions are interwoven into the discussion, to form a holistic analysis of the complex concept that is authenticity.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The study will focus on tourist eatertainment spaces in Victoria Falls hotel restaurants. This is a context which, to my knowledge, has not yet been studied in relation to authenticity quests in tourism. Further, on a pragmatic level, tourists have to eat and hotel restaurants are a convenient “convergence zone” where a variety of
people can be approached, observed, and if they consent, interviewed and photographed in the process of cultural production and consumption. In this sense tourism researchers are privileged when they conduct studies at tourist destinations, as they are not confined to single nationality groups of potential participants. Thus in tourist eatertainment venues can be found, at any one time during service hours, tourists of different nationalities and backgrounds. It is also important that the sample is not biased towards tourists who are cultural tourists per se, as the intention of the thesis is not to depict a “niche”, cultural tourist perspective, but rather to provide a broad representation of the tourist voice.

1.9 Research Questions

- What role does object authenticity perform in African and Western tourist quests and experiences of eatertainment in Victoria Falls? In other words, does authenticity matter?

- Do Western and African touristic quests differ in relation to eatertainment experiences? If so, in what ways?

- How does Othering inform touristic quests of object authenticity in Victoria Falls eatertainment?

- How are cultural eatertainment objects and performances authenticated, and, by whom, and by what mechanism?

- How do tourists subjectively experience existential authenticity in eatertainment space?

- What embodied expressions of existential authenticity (interpersonal and intrapersonal) are evident in eatertainment?

1.10 Research Approach

The overall approach of the study is to present an exploratory, context-specific, critical analysis of the phenomenon of authenticity in the context of Victoria Falls tourist eatertainment (Table 1.2). I combine Internet-based and hermeneutic
phenomenological techniques. An important aspect of the approach is the attempt to ensure that Other voices are represented in the research process and outcome, as Osagie and Buzinde (2011) put it, along with those of Western tourists. Thus the research is a “multiple register” analysis that engenders “a cultural negotiation” (Osagie & Buzinde, 2011, p. 212). A multiple register approach strives to include as many voices as possible, so that a hybrid of cultural perspectives is acknowledged and taken into account.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is both a philosophy and a method (LeVasseur, 2003; McPhail, 1995; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007), appropriate for the study of lived experiences. It combines hermeneutics, which is concerned with the art, or theory of interpretation, with phenomenology, the study of describing phenomena (Van Manen, 1990). The hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm is qualitative and interpretive, employing a naturalistic approach which attempts to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalisability of findings, qualitative inquiry seeks illumination, understanding and contextualisation (Golafshani, 2003).

In contrast to positivism, hermeneutic phenomenology rejects objectivity, abstraction, fixed reality and generalisability in favour of subjectivity, interpretive meaning, experience and understanding (Szarycz, 2009). The goal in hermeneutic phenomenology is to understand the nature and meaning of human experience; to discover the heart and depth of a person’s lived experience. It seeks to discover the essence of events, relationships, thoughts, feelings, values, and beliefs (Casterline, 2009). By bringing to the fore experience as it is articulated by the “experiencer”, hermeneutic phenomenology can generate new meanings which challenge conventional wisdom, and structural and normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). In Ablett and Dyer’s (2009) terms, hermeneutic phenomenology is an inclusive, critical and dialogical process. The researcher engages in a process of introspection, self-dialogue, and self-discovery, and, acquires a passionate engagement with the phenomenon which encourages disclosure from participants (Casterline, 2009). To facilitate self-reflection, the researcher might record thoughts, feelings, or ideas emerging through intuition, reading, observation, and living the research experience.
in a personal journal. These processes help the researcher to clarify the research question(s). Rich, vivid data are gathered through extended interviews, in which the researcher elicits a free flow of ideas, feelings, and images to unfold (Casterline, 2009). These data may be supplemented with personal documents such as journals, poetry, artwork, music, and photographs (Harper, 2002). An additional key feature of hermeneutic phenomenology is the explicit naming of assumptions and influences as contributors to the research endeavour (Laverty, 2003). Thus hermeneutic phenomenology is an explicitly reflexive methodology.

The present study also takes an integrative approach, merging theory with practice as advocated by Tribe (2005). By adopting a predominantly (hermeneutic) phenomenological design, my intention is to allow greater sensitivity to ethnocentric conceptions and biases through discursive analysis of subjective experiences. Further, and to the extent that this study critiques existing knowledge for its Westerncentricism, and for the epistemic violence embodied in the dearth of an African tourist perspective on authenticity seeking, the method qualifies as a critical hermeneutic approach. I therefore seek to challenge/disrupt the status quo by representing an otherwise muted voice. As tourism studies is slowly reaching a state of maturity whereby it has advanced beyond its applied business research base to embrace reflexive and critical academic inquiry (Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011), I do not wish to be left behind.

A critical, culture-informed approach lends my project to overlaps with the field of cultural studies, which is concerned with the political nature of modern society, with its associated history and power struggles. Cultural studies research focuses on ideology, social class, nationality, and ethnicity, among other socio-structural divides (Luka, 2010). It combines various fields, including social theory, history, philosophy, and political economy, to examine cultural phenomena in different contexts (Tomaselli, 1998). However, I will emphasise that I subordinate these two (cultural studies, critical hermeneutics), within a broader and flexible hermeneutic phenomenological design, so that the analysis does not go into a nuanced analysis of the intricacies involved in typical critical theory and cultural studies exegeses. Their inclusion will only serve a triangulatory, analytical function; they are not in
themselves philosophical reference points for this study. In addition, to the extent that the project requires immersion in the Zimbabwe culture as it is showcased in tourist eatertainment, the research approach has overlaps with ethnographic research.

Continuing on the above critical orientations, and at the risk of further complexity, this project bears the marks of “standpoint research” which is a move towards local, contextualised, situated knowledge. Standpoint research contends that gender, ethnicity, culture or some other group-or-site-specific element of fact-synthesis are ultimately responsible for both the form and content of knowledge (Humberstone, 2004). As such, as I indicated earlier, my study fits the format of “eighth moment” research, wherein research is a multicultural process, and class, race, gender, and ethnicity shape inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Eighth moment research is concerned with a moral discourse, aimed at developing critical conversations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Further, in such research, there are no stories “out there” waiting to be discovered and told, only stories yet to be constructed. This epistemological-ontological standpoint is central to my research design: I make no attempt to discover a certain, hidden truth “out there”; I strive instead to represent a situated, constructed knowledge from the perspectives of different groups of people, connected to cultural experiences in a Zimbabwean tourist eatertainment space.

I strongly agree with Humberstone’s (2004) assertions that dominant ideologies in the construction of tourism knowledge have tended to convey a “single truth”, and

This production of knowledge and development of theory was in the past largely based upon Eurocentric research...There appears to be reluctance in the field to engage with current debates ongoing in emancipator and cultural theories (2004, p. 119).

As a result, she adds, tourism research has largely continued to neglect the perspectives and experiences of marginalised groups, which include women, black people (her term, my emphasis), people with disability, and so forth. Unfortunately, Humberstone laments, tourism studies as a field of inquiry amounts to nothing if it is not about the locale, where cultures and contexts are perpetually intermingling.
The Emic Researcher

This study is *emic* in the sense that I am a part of the cultural context which I investigate. I was born, raised, and mostly educated in Zimbabwe. I also lived in Victoria Falls for a year, while working as a hospitality management intern at the Victoria Falls Safari, which houses one of the restaurants where I conducted the study, the Boma-Place of Eating. I return to a detailed description of the study setting later. However, with my positionality, which might be described variously as “a local”, “a Zimbabwean”, “a Shona” (meaning, of the Shona tribe), “an African”, “a former hospitality trainee”, “an overseas student”, culturally, I am in a vantage position as my sense of empathy is heightened by my shared background with a substantial proportion of study participants (Berry, 1999; Cole, 2007; Cutz & Chandler, 2000; Díaz-Loving, 1998; Helfrich, 1999). I therefore seek in this study an epistemology of “insiderness”, which also means that the study is a passionate, affective, reflexive, and “total immersion” process for me (Punch, 1998). Thus instead of *gazing upon* the Other, as etic researchers would do, I *share with*, this Other; I am a part of this Other; indeed I am this Other (Hitchcott, 2009).

While etic studies have their own merits, researchers in them may struggle to comprehend hidden meanings in exchanges that occur in a foreign cultural environment. Being adequately proficient in the two major Indigenous languages spoken in Zimbabwe (Shona and Ndebele), I was able to converse in vernacular with most Zimbabwean participants, and understand culture-specific, semiotic meanings, such as those conveyed in “inside jokes” and nonverbal gestures that can only be deciphered by an “insider”. My cultural intelligence in this sense also obviated the need for a translator, thus I avoided the potential loss of meanings that would accompany the alternate scenario. However, my positionality also introduced several challenges. In particular, in face-to-face interviews, I observed that Western interviewees recognised that their commentary on the local culture was simultaneously a critique of myself (I introduced myself as a local/Zimbabwean), and as a result seemed reluctant to provide unfavourable remarks. This, as I explain in forthcoming sections, was overcome with the triangulation of data generation techniques.
“Decolonising” Research

My methodology is a decolonising one in that I see and present Africans as subalterns who have not been allowed to speak in the course of tourism knowledge development. Most existing literature is a product of colonial and neo-colonial politics in which the native is to be gazed upon by a tourist, generally understood to mean a Westerner. My approach is to expand the African subaltern’s role in tourism; to decolonise this subaltern in the episteme of tourism. My desired outcome is “local theory” which is valuable both in its immediacy and complexity (Decrop, 1999; Denzin, 1978; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; King, 2006; Osagie & Buzinde, 2011; Punch, 1998; Stanfield, 1998; Whyte, 1996).

Purposive sampling

In this study, as is the common practice in the interpretive paradigm, I employ qualitative purposive/ judgement sampling. This method is defined as the process of selecting units (for example individuals, groups of individuals, organisations) based on a specific agenda relating to answering identified research questions (Abrams, 2010; Collingridge & Gantt, 2008; Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007; Short, Ketchen, & Palmer, 2002; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The process is therefore non-random; it is by definition “purposive”. Qualitative sampling recognises that some informants are better situated to providing relevant insights and understanding into a study than others (Abrams, 2010; Green, 2001; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Koerber & McMichael, 2008; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). While random sampling typically excludes outliers, qualitative researchers are often curious about negative, extreme, deviant, or overlooked cases (Abrams, 2010; Koerber & McMichael, 2008; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In purposive sampling, investigators use their discretion to decide who will provide “the best perspective on the phenomenon of interest, and then intentionally invites those perspectives into the study” (Abrams, 2010, p. 538).

Netnography

Social science is increasingly turning to the Internet as a (virtual) field work site (Williams, 2007). There is also a concurrent growth in literature on the use of the
world-wide-web as a primary research tool (James & Busher, 2006). With these developments, various online methods and adaptations have emerged, such as netnography, which I adopt in this study. Online environments have become cultural contexts in their own right, and a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods have been re-engineered to function in those online social settings (James & Busher, 2006). While these methods are yet to be examined more critically to determine both philosophical and technical implications, it appears likely that the Internet will help redefine the way social science research progresses henceforth.

Netnography is a relatively novel research technique originally developed for online marketing research by Robert Kozinets in the 1990s (Beaven & Laws, 2007; Dwivedi, 2009; Janta & Ladkin, 2009; Kozinets, 2006; Morgan, 2008). To be more accurate, netnography is a multimethod, that is, a combination of various methods and techniques that can include content analysis, historical analysis, semiotics, hermeneutics, narrative analysis, and thematic analysis, among others (O'Reilly, Rahinel, Foster, & Patterson, 2007). In this study, thematic analysis was conducted with tourists’ online reviews posted on travel-related sites.

Netnography provides a mechanism for accessing and interpreting computer-mediated textual discourse between anonymous or pseudonymous participants on a public forum (Kozinets, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2002). In its participative formats, where the researcher observes and actively participates in online exchanges with participants, it is comparable to ethnography, with the important difference in the execution of netnography, that the Internet is the fieldwork site. The comparison with ethnography is a problematic one, however, because the online environment might not permit the kind of in-depth cultural immersion that is possible with traditional ethnography. However, online communities are expanding rapidly, and more importantly, the level of interaction is becoming more sophisticated with the innovation of interactive web 2.0 technologies (Bowler, 2010).

Netnography is becoming increasingly popular, because, compared to ethnography, it is faster, less intrusive, and more convenient than traditional qualitative techniques such as interviews and focus groups (Kozinets, 2002; O'Reilly, et al., 2007).
Additionally, netnographic data analysis is far less cumbersome than interview techniques in that data are already in textual format, so that there is no need for transcription (O'Reilly, et al., 2007). What is particularly special about virtual field work is the possibility of boundless research populations, anonymous informants and multiple field sites (Williams, 2007).

For the present study, I downloaded and analysed post-visit reviews of the Boma-Place of Eating (Victoria Falls Safari Lodge), Jungle Junction Restaurant (Victoria Falls Hotel), Amulonga restaurant (A’Zambezi River Lodge), White Waters Restaurant (Kingdom Hotel), and Mama Africa Eating House from Tripadvisor.com, Igougo.com, Lonelyplanet.com, and Victoriafallsguide.net. These restaurants are among the most popular tourist choices in the resort town of Victoria Falls. They are also packaged as cultural experiences. More importantly, they have high numbers of online reviews posted about them online. In this study, netnography was especially useful for seeking out opinions that tourists would have been reluctant to express to me, a “cultural insider” or “local”, vis-a-vis the culture under scrutiny.

**Participant Observation**

In addition to netnography, I observed tourists and tourist spaces in the stated five restaurants for approximately 110 hours over the course of six months, as participant observer. I spent 70% of that time at the Boma restaurant, which served as the primary observation site, because of its overt coding of culture into the experience offered to tourists. It is also the busiest restaurant at the destination. Moreover, among the five restaurants, the Boma has the highest number of tourist reviews online.

I engaged in informal conversation with tourists, took photographs and notes, and, for a total immersion into the eatertainment experience, I also,

- chatted with the fortune teller;

- had my face painted;

- danced with local dance performers;
• participated in drum beating sessions;
• tasted local cuisines; and
• engaged other diners in conversation.

I also observed how culture is presented in other tourist spaces around Victoria Falls: on “village tours”; at the entrance to the Falls where traditional performance groups sing and dance as a welcome to tourists; on river cruises, on the streets in town, and at the Craft Village where tourists bargain for and purchase souvenirs. This form of unstructured observation provided a broad perspective of Victoria Falls as a tourist destination. These spaces were ideal contact opportunities for incidental, informal conversations with tourists, which provided insights into their experiences at the destination.

**Active Interviews**

I conducted active interviews, offsite and onsite, with 56 tourists (33 African tourists, and 23 Western tourists). Active interviews are semi-structured and conversational in nature, and focus on cultivating participants’ narrative activity, while maintaining focus (Caton & Santos, 2007; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). In phenomenological research, participants are requested to describe their experiences in detail. The questions were open ended, and I used follow up questions to probe. However, because I was seeking participants’ self-interpretive meanings of their own experiences, I allowed them to lead the direction of the interviews naturally, as far as possible (Laverty, 2003).

**Focus Groups**

I conducted focus group discussions with six traditional performance groups which entertain tourists in the restaurants. Each focus group lasted between 30 and to 120 minutes. The merit of focus groups lies in the opportunity to generate data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in group contexts (Colucci, 2007; Cooper & Yarbrough, 2010; Dixon, et al., 2010; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Wibeck, Dahlgren, & Öberg, 2007). Farnsworth & Boon (2010)
highlight additional merits of focus groups—they can: elicit talk that may be hard to prompt in individual interview situations; raise issues the researcher has not thought about; provide direct evidence concerning the similarities and differences in the participants’ perceptions and experiences as opposed to post hoc, statement-by-statement analyses and conclusions of the researcher; and, they provide the opportunity to observe a substantial amount of human interaction on a topic in a short period of time and using relatively limited face-to-face researcher contact (Frazier et al., 2010; Gibson, 2007; Gillespie, 2010; Murdoch, Poland, & Salter, 2010; Ureda et al., 2011). Further, the focus group method is particularly effective for connecting with “difficult-to-reach individuals”, and, safety in numbers makes some individuals more likely to consent to participate. Researchers can thus gain access to how people engage in collective sense-making, by analysing the dynamics of communication, language and thought in focus groups (Wibeck, et al., 2007).

**Complementarity of Netnographic and Traditional Data Procedures**

In this study I take advantage of the complementarity of netnographic and traditional data procedures. The weaknesses of either are largely made up for by the strengths of the other. For example, the reticence of Western tourists in face-to-face interviews, when asked to comment on the local cultural representations in Victoria Falls, is made up for in the candour characteristic of online reviews. On the other hand, the impossibility of probing participants in the kind of netnography adopted here, is compensated for by in-depth probing which was possible in some of the in-depth interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data type</th>
<th>Approximate contribution to the study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online reviews (netnographic data)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Interviews</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups (traditional performers)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation (eatertainment venues, tourist activity space)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thematic Analysis

At the core of the qualitative data analysis process is the identification of key themes (Guest, et al., 2006; Guest & McLellan, 2003; Gupta & Levenburg, 2010; Jia, 2011; Laverty, 2003; Szarycz, 2009). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning contained in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Conaway & Wardrope, 2010; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Singh, Hu, & Roehl, 2007). The analysis process consisted of seven stages, derived in combination from analytical processes laid out by several authors on thematic analysis in phenomenological research (Anderson, 1998; Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Sullivan, 2003; Todres & Wheeler, 2001; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). A summary of the research approach and procedures is provided in Table 1.2

1.11 Key Analytical Concepts

MacCannell’s “Staged Authenticity”

Dean Maccannell (1973) first introduced the theory of authenticity to tourism sociology. His work, although not necessarily representative of current thinking on this area, is important in developing a foundational background to the thesis. Further, MacCannell’s (1973, 1976) “staged authenticity” thesis, which bemoans the tourist’s doomed search for the authentic Other in other places and other times, is important for conceptualising the “fakery” that is inherent in the commoditisation of culture in tourism enterprise. MacCannell draws from Goffman’s (1959) theory of front and back stages, arguing that tourism as a commercial enterprise contrives an inauthentic version of “real culture” for showcasing in front stages.

Cohen’s “Emergent Authenticity”

Cohen’s (1979, 1988, 1993, 2002) critique of MacCannell rejects objectivist authenticity in favour of emergent, socially constructed and negotiable authenticity. Cohen is therefore a key theorist in applying a constructionist underpinning to
MacCannell’s initial contribution. His work was a marked departure from the realist conception of an authentic reality to be discovered “out there”. For Cohen (1979, 1988, 1993, 2002, 2007b), different tourists are motivated differently to embark on a tour. For example, tourists travelling in a “recreationary mode” might be less concerned about authenticity than those travelling in an “existential mode”. He argues that MacCannell’s grouping of tourists into the modern-man-in-general category is unjustifiably generalistic or homogenising. Further, Cohen asserts within his emergent authenticity theory, that what might be construed as inauthentic at one point may come to be accepted as authentic with the passage time.

**Wang’s Typology of Authenticity**

Wang’s (1999, 2000) work makes a significant contribution to authenticity theory in that it clearly distinguishes object-related authenticity from existential, or activity-related authenticity. Wang’s subconceptualisation of authenticity is useful as it is comprehensive and inclusive in its treatment of authenticity. It is therefore ideal as part of a theoretical framework for understanding authenticity within a context in which it has not been investigated before. Object-related authenticity focuses on the authenticity of toured objects. This includes objective authenticity, which refers to authenticity of originals (as in, for example, whether a piece of art is the traditional, “original thing”, made with traditional elements, using traditional methods), and constructivist authenticity, which relates to subjective projections of authenticity status to toured objects based on individual backgrounds, frames of reference, and beliefs. Existential authenticity on the other hand, refers to a state of Being to which tourists are elevated through participating in tourism activities, wherein they feel they are “true to themselves” (Wang, 1999, 2000). Table 1.2 summarises the research approach and procedures.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Design element</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description/ orientation/ content</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall design</td>
<td>Exploratory, interpretive, context-specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Reality is shaped by social, cultural, political, economic, ethnic, and other (Zimbabwe/Victoria Falls) context-specific forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Subjectivist, negotiable, situated, context dependant, socially-constructed (“eighth moment” epistemology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of knowledge</td>
<td>Lived experience, situated, culture/ context mediated, historical, critical subjectivity, living knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key theory</td>
<td>MacCannell’s “staged authenticity”; Cohen’s “emergent authenticity”; Wang’s typology of authenticity: objective authenticity, constructive authenticity, existential authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and Ethics</td>
<td>Formal ethics approval, informed consent, transparency, egalitarian, participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Hermeneutic Phenomenology with triangulations: netnography, standpoint (context-specific), critical, postcolonial, decolonising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry aim</td>
<td>Critical interpretation and understanding, giving voice to subaltern groups, questioning “grand narrative” of authenticity quests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Immersion in field, reflexive engagement with participants and context, empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection/generation</td>
<td>Netnography (tourist reviews, online marketing collateral), active interviews, participant-observation, reflective journal, focus groups, organisational documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Western tourists, African tourists, local performers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher positionality and voice</td>
<td>Critical advocate, emic, active voice, self-aware, reflexive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research credibility</td>
<td>Flexible criterion, trustworthiness, resonance, triangulation, reflexive humility, transferability to similar contexts, plural/multivocal, thick description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>Context-specific, therefore lacks external validity; but findings may be transferrable to similar African destination contexts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Pritchard, Morgan & Ateljevic (2011)*
1.12 Importance of the Study

To Theory

The research investigates the phenomenon of authenticity from a perspective and a context in which it has not been explored before. Beyond this, and more importantly, the research casts Africans in a role that is rarely assigned to them in tourist studies. Thus, instead of representing Africans only as tourees (or hosts), they are represented in this study, as tourers. In other words, I expand their identity in tourism theory beyond that of being the objects of the “imperial gaze”. I engage with critical perspectives to “unmask colonial epistemological frameworks, unravel Eurocentric logics, and interrogate stereotypical cultural representations”, as expressed by Kwok (2005, p. 2). Following Osagie and Buzinde’s (2011, p. 212) suggestion, the study prioritises local particularities, by letting locals speak “on their own terms”. Further, this study is one of very few which attempt to address the negotiation of power and cultural authority (that is, authentication) in the context of touristic eatertainment experience. The result is a multiple register analysis and critique of the theory of authenticity.

The study also contributes to a growing body of literature on the role of food in tourism experience (Alonso, 2011; Azarya, 2004; Beer, 2008; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; du Rand, Heath, & Alberts, 2003; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Oakes, 1999; Quan & Wang, 2004; Sims, 2009; Smith & Costello, 2009). This area of inquiry has become increasingly important as a growing number of tourists seek “peak” food tourism experiences (Dundes & Swann, 2008; Elmont, 1995; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Heung, 2000; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Kneafsey, 2000; Lin, et al., 2011; Molz, 2007; Quan & Wang, 2004). Furthermore, by analysing authenticity within a foodservice context, this study portrays Victoria Falls as a player in the tourist gastronomic market, a role which has not previously been associated with African destinations. Additionally, the study breaks new ground in its use of a web-based methodology, namely netnography, to examine the phenomenon of authenticity in touristic experience. This is significant as social science increasingly embraces the Internet as a fieldwork site.
To Zimbabwe's Tourism Development

The study's importance for Zimbabwe's tourism industry derives from the background that the country’s tourism policy has, in recent years, encouraged tourism and hospitality suppliers to package cultural attractions to supplement wildlife and water based attractions which have traditionally been the mainstay. This new thrust is a response to factors such as the increased interest in cultural products among tourists, concern over the environmental impacts (and therefore sustainability) of nature based tourism, and a call to rebrand Zimbabwe following several political and economic events which have tarnished Zimbabwe's destination image.

It is expected that the findings of this study will assist, in some way, decision makers in tourism as they quest to provide cultural experiences in a destination which hardly carries a cultural image. I strive throughout my discussion to maintain relevance from an applied business perspective, so that beyond the potential theoretical insights, the project can yield important practical implications for the future development of cultural tourism in Zimbabwe.

1.13 Ethical Considerations

Formal ethics approval of the project was sought from the University’s Ethics Committee (Approval Number ECN-11-163), to ensure that the research satisfied the guidelines and minimum requirements in relation to ethical research principles, including informed consent, beneficence, merit, and respect. Throughout the project, I maintained a keen sensitivity to, and respect for, the status of all research participants. Key within this, as recommended by Walsh & Downe (2006), was viewing the study not as on participants, but as with participants.

1.14 Structure of the Thesis

This first chapter of the thesis has provided a background to the study by outlining the problem, scope, research questions, research objectives, and research approach. I
also painted a brief picture of the context, in a bid to make clear both my intentions and scope.

In the Second Chapter I review existing literature and in the process develop conceptual and theoretical frameworks for analysing how authenticity and cultural authority are contested. I trace authenticity theory from its foundations in Dean MacCannell’s work, through Erik Cohen, to more recent works, covering both object-related and existential senses of the term. I also provide a review of relevant postcolonial theory, to the extent that it informs authenticity discourses in tourism scholarship. In addition, I explore the role of food in tourism, illustrating its symbolic consumption value. Beyond authenticity, I briefly discuss authentication, drawing primarily from Cohen & Cohen’s (2012) work, which has provided an important platform for exploring the politics (that is, power relations), of authenticity. I then clarify biases and gaps apparent in the literature, which I seek to address through this study, albeit partially. In particular, I expose how the African tourist voice remains under-represented in tourism scholarship.

The Third Chapter delineates the philosophy and method of hermeneutic phenomenology, as it is set out by Heidegger (1962, 1996). In addition, I explore netnography, which I adopt to triangulate the methods and data. I draw attention to the strengths of each methodological technique, and explain how, by combining several data generation methods, the overall result is a more holistic, rich, in-depth, multivocal, and rigorous approach. In that section, I demonstrate why hermeneutic phenomenology, instead of its counterpart, descriptive phenomenology, is suitable for a study where the context and lived experience are of the essence. I outline the actual execution of the research approaches, providing details on gaining research access, data gathering, data compilation, and data analysis. I also clarify the epistemological and ontological underpinnings, as well as their implications on the nature and content of knowledge generated. Further, I provide detail on the ethical issues associated with the study, including access, informed consent, confidentiality, and non-attribution. The grey areas which still surround the ethics of online-based research are also examined.
In **Chapter Four** I provide a more detailed discussion of the study setting. I provide a post-2000 analysis of Zimbabwe’s tourism industry, drawing attention to its political and economic woes in the last decade, which have seen tourist arrivals and occupancies at Victoria Falls drop drastically. I outline the characteristics of Victoria Falls as a tourist destination, creating a basis for positioning cultural eatertainment experiences, which are the focus of the thesis. Further, I present a rich description of the eatertainment spaces as they are experienced and consumed by tourists from around the world. I then paint a picture of typical tourist rituals and behaviour in eatertainment space.

The next chapter presents some of the findings of the study. To facilitate clarity in the content and analyses of the findings, I separate findings relating to object-related authenticity from those concerned with existential authenticity. Thus **Chapter Five** discusses object-related authenticity. In the chapter I highlight the challenges and issues associated with translating the term “authenticity” into Zimbabwean vernacular; that is, finding conceptual equivalents for the term. In what is central to this thesis, I compare African tourists with their Western counterparts, exploring the relevance of notions of authenticity to their quests in eatertainment experiences. An equally important part of the discussion of object-related authenticity is concerned with examining authentication processes and forms. Drawing from postcolonial theory, I also examine Othering tendencies as gleaned from authenticity seeking narratives among Western tourists.

Moving beyond the authenticity of toured cultural objects, in **Chapter Six** I focus on existential authenticity, a state of being “true to oneself”, as it is attained in eatertainment space. The chapter analyses both interpersonal and intrapersonal existential authenticity. I draw from African relational worldviews, whose relevance became apparent from African tourist narratives, to inform the analysis of African tourists’ experience of existential authenticity. This introduces a uniquely African perspective into the discussion, grounded in the mores and values of African society.

Finally, **Chapter Seven** draws conclusions by attempting to relate the different meanings and insights from the study into an integrated whole. This chapter also
considers implications for theory and practice. In the chapter I therefore answer the “so what?” question, with regards to the findings of the study. I attempt to translate my findings to practical tourism planning and management terms so that they make tangible contributions to the practice of tourism and hospitality in Zimbabwe. Specifically, I consider what the findings might tentatively suggest for the management of cultural eatertainment enterprises in African and other contexts (the idea of transferability).
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I review existing literature on authenticity, within the context of tourism studies. I demonstrate how the Western-centric view of authenticity dominates the literature, and how there remains an enduring “African tourist voice gap” in authenticity theory. I begin by providing the background on authenticity from its introduction to sociological tourism debate. In order to unpack the concept of authenticity, I then analyse the different types/approaches to authenticity from the perspectives of different schools of thought. In addition, I explore existing theory on the symbolic role of food in touristic experience, within which authenticity notions are relevant. The review also discusses the processes by which cultural objects are authenticated. At the end of the chapter, I summarise the gaps and biases that are apparent in existing studies, highlighting the scantiness of research on cultural representations and authenticity in the context of tourist entertainment.

2.2 Foundations of Authenticity Theory

MacCannell’s Staged Authenticity

Dean MacCannell, in his groundbreaking works, titled “Staged authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings” (1973), and “The Tourist: A New Theory For the Leisure Class” (1976), respectively, introduced the subject of authenticity to tourism sociological theory. In his “staged authenticity” thesis, MacCannell (1973) argues that the tourist is a modern pilgrim, who, alienated by the mundanity of life at home, travels in search of an authentic Other. He states that “the concern of moderns for the shallowness of their lives” and the inauthenticity of their day to day existence can be compared to the “concern for the sacred in primitive society”, so that tourism performs “the functions of religion in a modern world” (1973, pp. 589-590). He sees a tour as resembling a pilgrimage in that both are quests for authentic experiences.
MacCannell’s pessimism about the outcome of the tourist’s craving for authenticity is clear, however, as he asserts that “...there is no way out for them so long as they press their search for authenticity” (1973, p. 601). For MacCannell (1976, p. 1), the tourist is one of the best models available for “modern-man-in-general”. This label attached to moderns implies that they, or their behaviours and quests, are true to type. As noted in the introductory chapter, this assumption has been the basis for a number of critiques of MacCannell’s thesis, which question who exactly fits into the profile of modern-man-in-general, and whether such a generalisation is valid at all (for example Nyiri, 2006). MacCannell (1976, p. 91) summarises his argument thus:

Modern Man is losing his attachments to the work bench, the neighbourhood, the town, the family, which he once called “his own” but, at the same time, he is developing an interest in the “real life” of others.

He further claims that the more the individual sinks into everyday life, the more he or she is reminded of reality and authenticity elsewhere (1976); that the pretension and tackiness of modern lifestyles generate the belief that “somewhere, only not right here, not right now, perhaps just over there someplace, in another country, in another life-style, in another social class, perhaps, there is genuine society” (p. 155). Thus MacCannell’s seminal work on tourism produces a stereotypical tourist who invariably hungers for an authentic experience to compensate for what has become mundane existence in the home environment (Chhabra, 2010). Specifically, tourists from the West are presumed to fill a gap in their lives caused by the alienation of Western modernity through the consumption of apparently authentic cultures in other places; in exotic Third World destinations, or in historic cities and towns (Martin, 2010). Tourism in this view is seen as driven by curiosity to see how others live their lives (Prentice, 2001).

To develop his theory, MacCannell made use of Erving Goffman’s thesis on front and back stages in social space:

Parallelizing a common sense division, Goffman analyzed a structural division of social establishments into what he terms front and back regions. The front is the meeting place of hosts and guests or customers and service persons,
and the back is the place where members of the home team retire between performances to relax and to prepare. Examples of back regions are kitchens, boiler rooms, executive wash-rooms, and examples of front regions are reception offices and parlors. (MacCannell, 1976, p. 92)

For MacCannell, the tourist’s search for authenticity is doomed to fail, because all they have access to is staged authenticity in a front region, or a staged back region. MacCannell (1973, p. 589) asserts that tourists attempt to enter the back regions of the places they tour because they associate them with “intimacy of relationships and authenticity of experiences”. Tourist deception is, however, orchestrated in the back region, which, “closed to audiences and outsiders, allows concealment of props and activities that might discredit the performance out front” (MacCannell, 1976, p. 93).

Although MacCannell’s implicitly objectivist conceptualisation of authenticity has subsequently been questioned and criticised (Cohen, 1979, 1997, 1988, 2002; Martin, 2010; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), many authors explicitly or implicitly accept his theory as their foundational frame of reference for explaining touristic quests (Costa & Bamossy, 1995; Littrell, Andersen, & Brown, 1993; Prentice, 2001; Waller & Lea, 1998). As such, most related qualitative tourism studies do not begin from the fundamental question: does authenticity matter? Indeed, the majority of critics of MacCannell and his advocates do not go so far as rejecting authenticity theory outright. Instead, they simply strive to broaden or deepen (to “unpack”) the meaning of authenticity; thus, objective authenticity, performative authenticity, constructive authenticity, emergent authenticity, and staged authenticity (Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Wang, 2000).

Cohen’s Critique of MacCannell

Cohen (1997, 1988, 2002, 2007a, 2007b, 2010) has criticised MacCannell’s modern-man-in-general view of the tourist, which sees all modern tourists as searching for an authentic Other, in other places. Cohen states unequivocally that it appears too far-fetched to accept MacCannell’s argument that all tourists single-mindedly pursue ‘real’, authentic experiences, but are denied them
by the machinations of a tourist establishment which presents them with staged tourist settings and ‘false backs’...Different kinds of people may desire different modes of touristic experiences; hence ‘the tourist’ does not exist as a type (1979, p. 180).

Cohen (1979) is decidedly sceptical of MacCannell’s theory, arguing that at least some modern tourists, particularly the explorer and the original drifter, are indeed capable of penetrating the staged touristic space and observing other people’s life as it really is, admittedly, through their own cultural lenses. Thus, not all tourists, according to him, are doomed to fail in their quest for authenticity. He admits, though, that to penetrate front stages and staged back regions requires effort and application on the part of tourists, as well as a degree of sophistication which many tourists do not possess. In Cohen’s (1979) view therefore, putting all tourists in one class and labelling all of them as authenticity-seekers who fail miserably in their quest is oversimplification. He provides a phenomenological typology of tourist experiences by analysing the different meanings which interest in and appreciation of toured culture, social life and the natural environment at the destination has for the individual tourist. He thus distinguishes five modes of touristic experience, namely

- the recreational mode;
- the diversionary mode;
- the experiential mode;
- the experimental mode; and
- the existential mode

First, for tourists in the recreationary mode, he explains, the trip is a recreational form of entertainment similar in nature to other forms of entertainment such as cinema, theatre, or television. This kind of tourist does not really care for the authentic; and does not have a deep commitment to travel as a means of self realisation. The tourist travelling in this mode is extremely gullible, and is easily
taken in by the blatantly inauthentic, contrived and commercialised displays of culture, customs, crafts and landscapes of the toured society. In this mode therefore, tourism becomes, when contrasted with “high culture”, a trivial, frivolous activity which thrives on pseudo-events. Cohen warns however that the contempt directed at recreationary tourists is misplaced, because they achieve their ends: the pleasure of entertainment, for which authenticity is unimportant.

Second, the diversionary touristic quest, as Cohen puts, is “similar to the recreational, except that it is not meaningful, even in an oblique sense. It is the meaningless pleasure of a centre-less person” (1979, p. 186). This mode clearly precludes a quest for authenticity. Third, experiential tourists, even if they observe the authentic life of others, remain distanced from their “Otherness”, they are not “converted” to the Other’s life, nor do they accept their authentic lifeways (Cohen, 1979). Clearly, it is the experiential mode that Cohen sees as characterising tourists as they emerge from MacCannell’s (1973, 1976) description.

Fourth, the experimental mode describes tourists who do not actively seek the spiritual centre of their own society, but go in search of an alternative in many directions. Unlike the experiential traveller who derives enjoyment and reassurance from observing that others live authentically, the experimental traveller “samples and compares the different alternatives, hoping to eventually discover one which will suit his particular needs and desires” (Cohen, 1979, p. 189). Finally, the existential tourist is fully committed to an “elective” spiritual centre. According to Cohen (ibid), a tourist travelling in this mode is analogous to a pilgrim, and seeks meaningful, even spiritual experience. Cohen’s (1979) phenomenology of tourist experiences therefore describes a spectrum of tourism motivations ranging from a search for mere pleasure to a quest for meaning or authenticity. He warns, however, that the modes are separated only for analytic purposes, and “any individual tourist may experience several modes on a single trip; a change from one mode to another may also occur in the ‘touristic biography’ of any individual traveller” (Cohen, 1979, p. 192).
In addition to criticising MacCannell’s (1973, 1976) modern-man-in-general approach, as outlined above, Cohen (1988) argues that authenticity is also emergent, so that initially contrived objects may in the course of time come to be accepted as authentic cultural objects or events. Cohen stated his argument as follows:

Authenticity is conceived as a negotiable rather than primitive concept, the rigor of its definition by subjects depending on the mode of their aspired touristic experience. New cultural developments may also acquire the patina of authenticity over time — a process designated at “emergent authenticity”. It is also argued that commoditization does not necessarily destroy the meaning of cultural products, although it may change it or add new meanings to old ones (1988, p. 371).

Cohen (2002) asserts that authenticity is not a given concept, but one that is socially constructed, mutable and negotiable. Thus Cohen’s work can be seen as informed by what Wang (2000) calls the approach of constructivism in which there is no absolute or static original upon which the authenticity of originals relies.

2.3 Authenticity: The Search for a Definition

Definitions of “authenticity” are highly convoluted and as such have been widely contested (Beer, 2008; Conran, 2006; Graham, 2001; Selwyn, 1996; Silver, 1993; Taylor, 2001; Wall & Xie, 2005). As a consequence of its multiple connotations, the concept has been described as a heteroglot, or polysemic concept (Bruner, 2005; Cohen, 2012; Olsen, 2002). Indeed, the ambiguity of the concept has given scholars ample latitude to construct their own definitions and criteria for what passes as authentic (Conran, 2006). In Belhassen and Caton’s (2006) terms, authenticity is a “slippery” concept, and the extreme heterogeneity of usage of the term authenticity has been a source of confusion and counter-productivity, since the term is typically “tossed about in research texts, rather than carefully considered and situationally defined with a degree of precision sufficient to ensure successful communication between writer and reader” (Belhassen & Caton, 2006, p. 854). The meaning of authenticity, as observed by Steiner & Reisinger (2006) is somewhat a muddled
amalgam of philosophical, psychological, and spiritual concepts and theories, reflecting its multifaceted history.

“Authentic” may refer to objects and expressions that have not been altered by modernisation or commodification (this is discussed later), and that have strong associations with traditional societies and that are interesting to tourists because they diverge from the mainstream (Chang, Wall, & Chang, 2008; Smith & Duffy, 2003). For some, it denotes that something proceeds from its stated source (Jones, 2010). According to Beng (1995, p. 218), authenticity can be understood as “the attainment of an integrated, unstrained totality derived from...dialectical relationships” between varying contexts. Hall’s (2007) view of authenticity sees the notion as being born from serendipitous day to day experiences and connections rather than from “out there”; as deriving from the property of connectedness of the individual to the perceived, everyday world and environment and to the “processes that created it and the consequences of one’s engagement with it” (2007, p. 1140). As such, he explains, tourists may search for authenticity in tourism, but it may be found equally easily at home.

Cohen (2012) summarises the various senses in which object authenticity, in particularly, is conceived, namely: authenticity as “origins” (Cohen, 2004; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006); authenticity as “genuineness” (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006); authenticity as “pristinity” (Cohen, 2004); authenticity as “sincerity” (Taylor, 2001); authenticity as “creativity” (Daniel, 1996); authenticity as “flow of life” (Cohen, 2004). These senses are not exhaustive, and as time progresses, definitions and connotations of the concept of authenticity will very likely continue to multiply. It does not appear that scholars could ever reach a universal “working” definition of the concept, in the context of tourism. This frustration with trying to find a universal definition of authenticity has led some scholars to conclude that the concept of authenticity must be abandoned altogether as the confusion surrounding it is so great that it appears to negate any contribution to knowledge the concept might have brought to the field of tourism (Beer, 2008; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). For some, it should be abandoned because it has been conceptualised in ways that make untenable assumptions about the nature of reality, that is, in ways that are
“ontologically unsound” (Belhassen & Caton, 2006), and any knowledge or conception of reality linked to its dialectic is, within this argument, questionable. Reisinger & Steiner (2006), however, suggest that because of “irreconcilable differences”, the term authenticity should be replaced by more explicit, less “pretentious” terms such as genuine, actual, accurate, real, and true, when referring to tourists’ and scholars’ perceptions of authenticity of toured objects and tourist experiences.

In spite of the ambiguity of meanings, however, in tourism discourses, it is safe to suggest that the term “authenticity” is understood in two senses: authenticity as genuineness/realness of cultural objects (objectivist/object/object-related authenticity), and secondly, authenticity as an internal existential state, referred to as existential authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 2000). I discuss these in more detail in the next section, as they have been conceptualised by Wang (2000). Unfortunately, sometimes authors do not make a distinction between these two conceptions in their arguments. As a result, debates of authenticity can be very hard to fathom, and it is easy to become lost in the semantic confusion. But while operationalising “authenticity” as a term is clearly problematic, Belhassen and Caton (2006, p. 854) choose to focus on the positive contribution which the concept and other such slippery theories in tourism can make:

In accordance with this view, “slippery” concepts like authenticity (or leisure, identity, or postmodernism, for that matter) can be seen as highly functional, rather than counterproductive, since they serve as flashpoints around which scholars working from different perspectives can congregate, debate, deliberate, and influence one another, thereby allowing new and more informed understandings to emerge.

Thus the fluidity of the concept can be viewed positively as allowing social scientists the analytic latitude to view it from whichever angle they choose. As Belhassen & Caton (2006) argue, the plurality afforded by allowing terms to remain unstable should be welcomed, as this plurality enables growth and progress in the scholarly discourse and in the critical understanding of various tourism phenomena.
There is no need, according to them, for social scientists to aspire for “true” or “best” meanings of concepts.

The problem of defining authenticity having been demonstrated, the question can be posed whether the concept has graduated to the status of “basic concept”. Answering this requires first that we understand what a basic concept is: a basic concept within a field of inquiry/discipline is an idea accepted “once and for all” by all discipline members (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). What is clear therefore about authenticity in tourism is that the answer is negative; authenticity is not yet a “black box” (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 66). It remains in the fuzzy domain of tourism theorisation.

**Wang’s Typology**

Having illustrated the confusion which arises when references to authenticity are imprecise, in this section I discuss how Wang’s (1999, 2000) theoretical framework, which subconceptualises authenticity, makes a particularly valuable contribution in that regard. Wang (2000) distinguishes three types of authenticity, namely objective authenticity, constructive authenticity, and existential authenticity. I adopt this typology as the analytic framework for my study for several reasons. First, it is relatively simple without being overly simplistic. The three types of authenticity cover, in my opinion, the major conceptions of authenticity from the existing multiple schools of thought. Second, it makes an important distinction between object-related authenticity and activity-related authenticity, thus eliminating the source of confusion characteristic of most works in which these two quite separate ideas are conflated. Third, Wang’s typology operationalises authenticity, so that it is translatable to practical tourism experiential contexts. Thus it is easier in this framework to understand authenticity in tourist experiences in different settings. Fourth, Wang’s typology is the most widely adopted theoretical framework (sometimes implicitly so) in contemporary writings on authenticity. Its adoption therefore makes it easier to communicate the findings of this thesis effectively to a wide scholarly audience. Finally, Wang is perhaps one of the few tourism authenticity theorists who have succeeded in clearly explicating their understanding
of authenticity in a relatively straightforward and accessible manner. This idea resonates with Belhassen & Caton’s (2006) advocacy for “communicative accountability”.

**Objective (or Objectivist) Authenticity**

Objective/objectivist authenticity refers to authenticity of the “original”, as in deciding whether a dance is re-enacted by the local people according to local tradition or custom. Authentic experiences are equated to an “epistemological experience”, that is, cognition, of the authenticity of originals (Wang, 2000). Objective authenticity therefore represents a realist conception which advocates a discernible basis for the authenticity of tangible cultural objects that include artefacts, events, cuisines, practices, and dress. As Reisinger and Steiner (2006, p. 69) state, objectivist authenticity “has the flavour of realism, which is based on the idea that there is an objectively real world to which one can refer as a standard or for confirmation when making judgements about what is true, genuine, accurate, and authentic”. This “objective” approach to authenticity denotes that “the landscapes and socioscapes of visual consumption should preferably be manifestations of lived history” (Jansson, 2002, p. 439). A quest objective authenticity thus is therefore a search for “originals” or for the “truths” that “underlie the logic of modernity” (Kim & Jamal, 2007, p. 183).

According to Reisinger and Steiner (2006), works of art, artifacts, cuisine, and rituals are usually described as authentic or inauthentic, in the objective sense, depending on whether they are manufactured or performed by locals according to their traditions. Thus objective authenticity can be construed as signifying that something is genuine, unadulterated, without hypocrisy, honest itself, both in terms of superficial characteristics and in depth; in other words, the “real thing” (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Stated more illustratively, objective authenticity connotes the “museum-related” sense of what is claimed to be authentic:

where persons expert in such matters test whether objects of art are whatever they appear to be or are claimed to be, and therefore worth the price that is
asked for them- or, if this has already been paid, worth the admiration they are being given (Trilling, 1972, p. 93).

Put alternatively, objectivists/realists/modernists see authenticity as “a real property of toured objects that can be measured against absolute and objective criteria”, an “expert” judgement (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 68). Within this view, tourists might think they have had an encounter with something authentic, whereas the object might in reality be false or staged, an imitation or a simulation. From the objectivist approach therefore, fake toured objects cannot acquire the status of authentic simply because tourists judge them to be so, although constructivists, as I will discuss later, would have a different view on the matter.

According to Hall (2007, p. 1139), to accuse “something of being inauthentic carries with it a strong moral judgement that may in many circumstances lead to indignation”. Further, in the event that “fakes” are deliberately represented as “originals”, there is an added moral dimension, because, as he puts it, people do not want to be lied to. However, it is reasonable to argue that the notion of objectivity in relation to authenticity is more problematic than constructive and existential authenticity, in that there is in it a need to establish, with certainty and finality, the credibility of the authority who makes the supposed “objective” judgement. Objective authenticity assumes that there is a fixed basis somewhere for judging authenticity. But where is such a basis found? Judgements are made by individuals or groups of people. Where people are involved, objectivity becomes a misplaced concept. Some scholars have also suggested that objective authenticity is a false construct resting on an untenable ontology which serves to limit the enjoyment of tourists as they constantly try to compare their actual experiences to preconceived expectations (Belhassen & Caton, 2006; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).

Not surprisingly, the objective view of authenticity has come under fervent criticism from constructivists who view reality as a product of social construction, and authenticity as negotiated through meaning making and agreement, rendering it subject to cultural selectivity and/or interpretation and “the hegemonic voices of cultural marketers, scholars, authorities, and more” (Kim & Jamal, 2007, p. 183).
Indeed, of all the approaches to authenticity, the objectivist view of authenticity is perhaps the least popular among contemporary scholars. This is not to say that it has lost its appeal totally:

The modernist sense of authenticity as genuineness, actuality, accuracy, originality, or truth that can be determined objectively reflects a way of thinking that is now less prevalent in the academic community but still occurs in business circles. It has the flavor of realism, which is based on the idea that there is an objectively real world to which one can refer as a standard...The rise of relativism, postmodernism, poststructuralism and constructivism has convinced many that there is no actual, true, genuine, objective reality that can be the standard against which to assess authenticity, or at least no one has reliable access to it, unmediated by their subjective perspective. So the idea of object authenticity is no longer likely to be as readily accepted, at least in academic circles, as it might have been 40 years ago (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 69).

Further, with the emergence of postmodern theory, a post-structuralist perspective which rejects objective authenticity continues to gain primacy (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Chhabra, 2010; Goulding, 2000). Postmodernist theory rejects a monovocal, unitary portrayal of authenticity (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Cohen, 2007a, 2007b; Goulding, 2000; Martin, 2010; Mazierska, 2002). The emphasis in this school of thought is on the tourist’s existential state which has little to do with toured objects, authentic or otherwise. I return to a brief discussion of the postmodern view later. We must not digress too far from Wang, yet.

**Constructive Authenticity**

As noted above, the constructivist view of authenticity (thus *constructive authenticity*) views authenticity as a product of social construction, lending itself to subjectivity and negotiability (Cohen, 2012; Wang, 1999, 2000). Perhaps the most expressive articulation of the constructed, that is, negotiable nature of authenticity is that provided by Chang et al (2008, p. 391): “the concept of authenticity..., like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.” This approach to authenticity is therefore
biased in favour of human agency, wherein “individuals are regarded as being capable of total interpretive authorship of their experiences in the world” (Belhassen & Caton, 2006, p. 855). Constructive authenticity represents an attribute which is projected onto toured objects by tourists or tourism suppliers based on their imagery, expectations, preferences, powers, and subjective perceptions of verisimilitude, genuineness, originality, and authority. All of these subjective perceptions are the product of social discourse (Zhu, 2012). Authenticity or inauthenticity become a result of how individuals perceive and interpret objects and expressions.

In other words, from a constructionist perspective, the quality of authenticity or inauthenticity is not an ontological condition, but rather a label or perceived status according to socially prescribed criteria (Zhu, 2012). The basis of authenticity becomes social and personal, so that ultimately all tourism experiences and judgements thereof are personal (Beer, 2008; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Thus emphasis is placed on subjective meaning that is only accepted within a specific context. A closely related concept is Prentice’s (2001) learned authenticity, which he defines as built around the expert opinion of tour guides and/or other authorities. Tourists may defer to the subjective opinions of these “experts”, and revise their own perceptions. Therefore constructive authenticity is conceptualised as a product of a multitude of personal and social influences.

Constructionism, from which constructive authenticity draws, holds the ontological assumption that there is no unique real world that pre-exists independently of human mental activity and human symbolic language (Hollinshead, 2006; Ryan & Gu, 2010). Reality is best viewed under this framework as pluralistic and plastic; as the result of varying versions of human interpretation and construction; and in simpler terms, as the result of perspective. Consequently, the experience of authenticity is pluralistic, relative to each type of tourist, who may have a unique way of definition, experience, and interpretation. Tourists make judgements about the authenticity of toured objects and these perceptions are real in their own right, regardless of the experts' view from an “objective” viewpoint. Constructionists see authenticity as subject to cultural selectivity “and/or interpretation and the hegemonic voices of cultural marketers, scholars, local authorities, and more” (Hollinshead, 2006;
Constructive authenticity has also been described as “cool” authenticity, wherein tourists make judgements about the authenticity of toured objects (Selwyn, 1996; Smith & Duffy, 2003).

Constructive authenticity denotes that objects are not authentic in themselves, but are elevated to authentic status through social processes (Kim & Jamal, 2007). As Reisinger & Steiner (2006, p. 70) explain:

> Things appear to be authentic not because they are inherently so, but because their genuineness is constructed by beliefs, perspectives, or powers...In constructivist ideology, no one has access to a real world, independent of human mental activity and symbolic language...What is called objective knowledge and truth is the result of different opinions and perspectives that gain acceptance; knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind in reality...

A further possibility within constructive authenticity is emergent authenticity, as already explained (Cohen, 1988). Since authenticity can be appropriated by association, emergent authenticity can be produced when an inauthentic object is immersed into what is perceived as authentic (Robinson & Clifford, 2007). Over the course of time, cultural objects that were previously understood to be fake may become accepted as authentic. In agreement with this idea, Hall (2007) notes that “over time replications become part of the everyday and personally appropriated rendering them authentic” (p. 1140).

In the context of ethnological tourism, “people from sometimes disparate origins both authenticate and contest pre-existing notions of the Other” (Conran, 2006, p. 282). Ethnological judgements are relevant to this study; indeed they form the socio-cultural landscape of analysis, especially as they relates to contestation of Zimbabweaness/Africanness—these phenomena which are related to the concept of authentication (Cohen & Cohen, 2012), to which I return later.
Existential Authenticity

The third and final type of authenticity in Wang’s subconceptualisation is existential authenticity, which denotes an existential state of Being marked by internal fulfilment, in which individuals feel that they are “true to themselves”, or are in touch with the real world and with who they “really” are. The state is activated when tourists are “having a good time” and when they are actively involved in the tourism experience—it is a self-oriented, activity authenticity (Cook, 2010; Jamal & Hill, 2002; Jamal & Stronza, 2008; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 2000). This experience of authenticity through active involvement is conceptualised as performative authenticity by Knudsen & Waade (2010). They argue that tourists can be viewed as bodies performing at specific sites; everything that the tourist sees, touches, hears, smells, and tastes, may be performed and produced both as real and as authentic. Other studies have focused on connection between the tourists’ emotions and their perceptions of authenticity, thus “emotional authenticity” (Matheson, 2008).

Unlike object-related authenticity (objective and constructive authenticity), existential authenticity has nothing to do with whether toured objects are authentic or otherwise in the objective, “museum related sense”, delineated above. As Hall (2007) argues, the notion of authenticity in the existential sense should “not be used with respect to things or places” (p. 1140). Existential authenticity embodies a psychological elevation; an assertion of true identity (Berger, 1973; Berman, 1970; Kjell, 2002; Nehemas, 1999; Olsen, 2002; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999, 2000; Youngsun). Humans are individuals and they want to guard their individuality (Goulding, 2000; Hegel, 1977; Heidegger, 1996; Kant, 1929; Kim & Jamal, 2007). They want to be true to their “essential nature” (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 299). Existentiality is associated with personal identity, autonomy, individuality, self-development, self-realization and self-actualization (Ryan, 2000; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). It relates to an inherently emotional state which tourists can experience in tourism (Chang, 2008; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Matheson, 2005, 2008). Clearly, the concept draws from the philosophy of what it means to be happy, being what one wants to be, asserting one’s own choices, living in harmony with
one’s own sense of self, and being attuned with one’s individual experiences, rather
than seeing the world through institutionalized frameworks (Steiner & Reisinger,
2006, p. 300):

It is part of a long philosophical tradition concerned with what it means to be
human, what it means to be happy, and what it means to be oneself...Some
common themes...include self-identity, individuality, meaning making, and
anxiety. Being in touch with one’s inner self, knowing one’s self, having a
sense of one’s own identity and then living in accord with one’s sense of
one’s self is being authentic...To be authentic, people need to make
themselves as they want to be. They must assert their will in the choices
made when confronted by possibilities...

Existential authenticity also embodies what has been termed “hot authenticity”,
which is centred on the tourists’ internal negotiation of the reality of their
experiences (Selwyn, 1996). It contrasts with “cool” authenticity, alluded to earlier,
which is concerned with the authenticity of cultural objects (that is, objective
authenticity and constructive authenticity) (Smith & Duffy, 2003). Some authors
have argued that tourists first and foremost negotiate meanings of their experience;
that toured objects are a secondary matter (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Uriely, 2005;
Uriely, Yonay, & Simchay, 2002).

Because it emphasises individual will and choice, existential authenticity also
centres in part on a nonconformist existence (Berger, 1973; Handler, 1986; Steiner
& Reisinger, 2006). It allows tourists to escape the “fakeness” of public spheres and
public roles and become true to themselves (Berger, 1973; Steiner & Reisinger,
2006). Tourism therefore enables tourists to become nonconformist by liberating
themselves from the scripted life in modernity. With this liberation, they can be
more attuned to their own individual experiences, rather than interpreting the world
through institutionalised concepts and abstractions (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

Converse to the authentic state of Being, people risk becoming inauthentic when
they “ignore their own unique possibilities”, and “adopt the common possibilities
they share with others” (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 306). They become
inauthentic whenever they aspire to be or attempt to be anything other than their natural, spontaneous selves: claiming to feel what they do not feel, aligning their actions with standards, or feigning indifference when they feel otherwise. To be authentic, people also need the “courage and tenacity” to claim their own fate, even when it is in conflict with the average opinion. Thus, as Steiner and Reisinger argue, tourists being authentic in an existential sense would be uninterested in a tour guide’s “expert” opinion; they would aspire to stay off the beaten track, they would not embrace others’ opinions about what is of high quality or value. In short, they would only ever rely on their own, unique understanding as truth.

Existential authenticity, being experience-oriented, is a transient state. It is continually changing from one moment to another. Therefore, a person cannot be authentic or inauthentic all the time; rather, one can only be authentic momentarily in different situations. As such, all tourists have the capacity, and often propensity, to change from the authentic to the inauthentic state at any moment in and outside their experience in tourism (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). The transience of existential authenticity demonstrates the doomed nature of tourists’ search for authenticity, even in its existential form. Feelings of being true to oneself are fleeting and perishable. Tourists unfortunately do not have a reservoir to store authenticity in this sense: all they can get are passing glimpses. Thus even in its internalised form, being authentic as an individual state of Being is still elusive. But is existential authenticity only to be found in the so-called exotic, remote and primitive, or in special forms of tourist activities?

Two forms of existential authenticity have been identified in the literature, namely intrapersonal and interpersonal authenticity (Leigh et al., 2006; Wang, 1999).

2.3.1.1 Intrapersonal Authenticity

Intrapersonal authenticity relates to the individual self, and includes physical aspects (for example relaxation and invigoration), and psychological aspects, such as self discovery and self realization. The individual is at the centre of the experience of intrapersonal authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 301):
Authentic tourism experiences are associated with identity, autonomy, individuality, self-development, and self realization...tourist experiences are essentially individualistic...they are inherently personal...tourists can experience the creation and reaffirmation of identity by using insights gathered about a different culture to understand their own place in time and space. These descriptions capture the personal identity dimension of authenticity that characterizes the Heideggerian framework.

According to Wang (2000), intrapersonal authenticity involves bodily feelings/experiences that include relaxation, rehabilitation, diversion, recreation, entertainment, refreshment, sensation seeking, sensual pleasures, excitement, and play. Wang views these as part of a “recreational ritual” and identifies two levels on which the body is involved in the authentication of experience. On the first level, the body becomes in tourism a display of personal identity in the form of health, naturalness, youth, vigour, vitality, fitness, movement, beauty, energy, leisure class, taste, distinction, and romance. Secondly, the body is the primary organ of sensibility or feeling: it is more than a corporate subject; it is the “feeling-subject” or the “body-subject” (Wang, 2000, p. 66). Whereas in the work/home environment, the body is subjected to “self-control, self-constraint, and organisational manipulation, in tourism...sensual pleasures, feelings, and other bodily impulses are to a relatively large extent released and consumed” (Wang, 2000, p. 67). Bodily quests, such as for sexual freedom and spontaneity are intensively and immediately gratified, in a fashion which Wang (2000, p. 67) describes as constituting an “ontological manifesto” for personal authenticity.

Beyond bodily feelings though, the experience of intrapersonal authenticity also manifests in what Wang conceptualises as self-making. As citizens of modernity feel trapped in the extreme routinisation and over-predictability of their everyday lives, they might turn to tourism to attain self-fulfillment. Existential authenticity of this kind relies on the negation of everydayness and material austerity (Jansson, 2002). In the experience of intrapersonal authenticity, individuals transcend routine life characterised by overpredictability and a “feeling of loss” (Wang, 2000, p. 67).
2.3.1.2 Interpersonal Authenticity: Liminality and Communitas

Interpersonal authenticity describes social authenticity experienced through a collective sense of self that is derived in part from the strengthening of social bonds in group activities. Tourists are in search not only of the authentic Other, but also for authenticity of, and between themselves (Wang, 2000). Tourism or toured objects could indeed, according to Wang, simply be a means by which tourists are called together. Collective experiences so created provide a platform for tourists to engage in interpersonal dialogue that often entails credentialing performances in a space where participants may access their true selves in the presence of “relevant others” (Leigh et al., 2006, p. 483), such as family and friends, or tourists from similar backgrounds. The conviviality of the collective experience becomes the embodiment of interpersonal “realness” of the experience.

Interpersonal authenticity may be experienced through seeking a sense of togetherness and belonging as in family tourism, experiencing emotional bonds and real intimacy with others (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). If, as observed by Wang (1999, 2000), the family is a central private institution for modern individuals to access their true selves, then family tourism offers a peak and ritual experience of such existentially authentic family interaction or “we-relationship”. In recreational tourism activities therefore, of which eatertainment experiences in Victoria Falls are an example, people not only extract pleasure from viewing sites, events and performances, but they also experience intensely authentic, natural and emotional bonds, and real intimacy (Wang, 2000).

Further, tourism spaces, by being outside-normal-life, also often possess the quality of liminality, a concept commonly associated with the work of anthropologist Victor Turner (Turner, 1969, 1987, 1995). The term “liminal” comes from the term “limen”, which means threshold. Turner conceptualised liminality as characterised by existing “betwixt and between”, a realm of pure possibility, and the mood of maybe, might be, as if, hypothesis, fantasy, conjecture, and desire (Beckstead, 2010; Mason & Lo, 2009; Turner, 1967). According to Johnson (2010), liminal zones occur in the space between known and unknown, insider and outsider, marking
swings between certainty and uncertainty. More simply, liminality can be understood as any condition outside the peripheries of everyday life (Turner, 1967, 1969, 1987, 1995; Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005). Tourism spaces, being outside everyday life, conspire to form a domain in which escape from structural commitments is possible (Mason & Lo, 2009). In a liminal (or liminoid) zone “conventional social norms and regulations are temporarily suspended as tourists take advantage of the relative anonymity and freedom from community scrutiny” (Kim & Jamal, 2007, p. 184).

In liminality tourists feel free to engage in behaviours that cross the barriers of convention, explore alternative self-identities, and obtain unrestrained bodily pleasure (Currie, 1997; Kim & Jamal, 2007), as in the case of the Sydney Mardi Gras, for example (Markwell, 2002). As a further example, in “normal” settings, individuals supposedly do not engage in sexual relations with strangers; however, on holiday, tourists are given a “sexual license”, and they can abandon the customary courting behaviours of “normal” life (Currie, 1997). Therefore, in liminal zones, tourists have an altered point of reference, allowing them to behave near opposite from, or inversionary of, their normal behaviours (Currie, 1997), without necessarily attracting societal judgement. Thus different tourism spaces exhibit a mixture of inversionary and prosaic behaviours, to varying degrees. By accommodating inversionary behaviours, tourism spaces allow for the experience of ‘nonconformist’ authenticity, where individuals can pursue the expression of their true, spontaneous selves, without the pressure of societal standards.

However, to enter the liminal state, tourists must shed their home environment’s social expectations, and traverse the limen which separates the home and tourism environments (Currie, 1997). Once they have entered the liminal realm, they are liberated from the normal mode of societal interaction, to a state of antistructure—an antithesis of the home environment. Of course, tourists do not invert all their home behaviours, nor do they desire to (Currie, 1997). Rather, they will enact prosaic behaviours which they deem necessary or too costly to alter.
Liminality is understood as a conduit for “tourist communitas”—a spontaneous levelling of social status, escaping norm-governed, institutional structures, arising from weakened ties to the world of production and work (Jansson, 2007; Maguire, 2010). Communitas is marked by natural sociality, spontaneous, open, nonordinary behaviour, genial interaction, interest in each other, and a sense of belonging (Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005). For Turner (1967, 1969, 1972, 1982), there exists a dialectic between the mediacy of social structure (a status system), and the immediacy of communitas (an open society); the one occurs where the other is not (Guan, 2001; Waskul, 2005). The relationships between society-as-structure and society-as communitas are mediated by ephemeral experiences of liminality (Waskul, 2005).

In touristic experience, as in any other of its instances, communitas in turn acts as an ideal atmosphere for intrapersonal authenticity. In communitas, “structures fall apart and differences arising out of institutionalised socioeconomic and socio-political positions, roles, and status disappear” (Wang, 2000, p. 69). In an atmosphere of communitas, individuals confront each other integrally, rather than as segmentalised into status and roles, and everyone is eligible to be part of the homogeneous whole, as each member’s essential humanity is all that counts (McGinnis et al., 2008). The result is a transcending camaraderie of universal equality of status (Belhassen et al., 2008; Goulding, 2011). This is experienced as an intense feeling of community spirit, togetherness, and solidarity (Goulding, 2011). In this state, tourists become distinctively affable and sociable (Belhassen et al., 2008).

Tourists as “liminars’ (persons experiencing liminality), elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions within cultural space (Cody & Lawlor, 2011). In other words, liminality is useful for examining instances where identities are suspended; where alliance with social categories is irrelevant (Cody & Lawlor, 2011). The pleasure of tourism then lies not only in seeing the exotic, but also in sharing and communicating this pleasure with others, in an egalitarian atmosphere. Lau (2010, p. 480) describes this form of authenticity relating to “truthful human relationships or individuals interacting on the basis of their real selves” as “relationship authenticity”. In liminal tourist space, a zone in
which tourists free themselves from the false social hierarchy and status distinctions can emerge.

There are two types of communitas, namely existential/spontaneous and normative communitas (Collins, 2005). Existential communitas is a transient personal experience of togetherness, while normative communitas develops over time through organisational effort to make the community spirit permanent (Hopkins, 2011). Normative communitas arises out of the desire or need to transform existential communitas into an enduring social system (Naterer & Godina, 2011). It is the existential or spontaneous form of communitas which I would argue is most relevant to touristic experience, because of the transient nature of interpersonal interactions (Collins, 2005).

**The Postmodern View on Authenticity**

As indicated earlier, with the emergence of postmodern theory, a post-structuralist perspective which rejects objective authenticity continues to gain relevance and primacy (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005; Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Chhabra, 2010; Goulding, 2000). Cohen (2012) notes that as the concept of (object) authenticity is becoming less relevant to the study of postmodern tourism, the theoretical discourse surrounding it appears to have exhausted itself. Postmodernist theory rejects a monovocal, unitary portrayal of authenticity (Martin, 2010). It sees society as embodying fragmentation, imperfection, and blurred boundaries, and tourists as emotion driven, experience seekers (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010).

However, as Wang (2000) notes, postmodernism is not a single, unified, or well-integrated school of thought. Instead, there are diverse views, although, with regards to authenticity, “the approaches of postmodernism seem to be characterized by the deconstruction of authenticity”, wherein the basis of argument is frequently the untenability of “copy” and “original” separation, which most object authenticity theory depends on or assumes (p. 54). From some postmodernist standpoints, authenticity is seen as irrelevant to many (post-tourists) who either view it as trivial, or as a marketing gimmick for commercial tourism (Beer, 2008; Feifer, 1985; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006):
“Postmodernists assert that authenticity is irrelevant to many tourists, who either do not value it, are suspicious of it, are complicit in its cynical construction for commercial purposes, or are aware that it is merely a marketing device (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 66).

Postmodernists see the line between the real and fake as so blurred that argument about what is authentic or inauthentic is theoretically futile. The postmodern tourist/“post-tourist”, according to this view, does not recognise the existence of a true authentic experience, and instead plays with an eclectic mix of experiences (pseudo events) for hedonistic enjoyment (Feifer, 1985; Mantecon & Huete, 2008; Ritzer & Liska, 1997). Postmodernism also highlights the political risks associated with confining the authentic Others in their “exotic box”, in the process likely denying them full engagement and coevality with a wider world (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Goulding, 2000; Hongyan, 2009; Kien, 2006; Markula, 1998; Martin, 2010, Mazierska, 2002; Williams, 2002).

Radical postmodernists have suggested that postmodern tourists in fact deliberately seek inauthenticity (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). However, some authors disagree, asserting, for example, that people in postmodern societies are in fact more interested in authenticity and strive to overcome inauthenticity; that postmodern society, being characterised by fragmentation, confusion, emptiness, alienation and by a crisis of morality and identity, predisposes people to long for a more authentic existence (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). In other words, according to this argument, people have become more concerned with identity, meaning and values, and with nostalgia and history. These arguments clearly resonate with MacCannell’s (1973) foundational thesis, already elaborated.

Postmodernists argue further that some objects are “more real than real”, that is to say, “hyperreal” (Yang & Wall, 2009). Related to this argument, within the postmodern view resides the “hyper-tourist”, who, in contrast to modern tourists, “strives to break out of the dominant schemes of classification, to escape the fixed meanings of certain kinds of travel” and to explore “the real of representations” (Jansson, 2002, p. 439). Jansson opines that hyper-tourists are interested only in
symbolic authenticity, and for them, travel is a way of mixing cultural symbols in new combinations, and creating stylistic ensembles “without anchorage in social conventions, and simultaneously avoiding the classification of the self” (2002, p. 439). Further, for hyper-tourists, places and artefacts typically excluded from the dominant images of tourism can become the most desired objects of the “hyper-tourist-gaze”, as in shock tourism, the aim of which is to seek out the ugliest and most boring sites.

In relation to postmodern theory, and with a hint of frustration, Reisinger & Steiner (2006, p. 73) conclude that if indeed postmodernists are right in claiming that tourists are less concerned about authenticity, then worrying about object authenticity is a waste of time. If, on the other hand, constructivists are right in claiming that authenticity is socially constructed, then object authenticity as a phenomenon is so fluid, insubstantial, and beyond consensus that it is useless as a basis for future research and knowledge making. In a move that has attracted heated responses from other tourism scholars (see for example Belhassen & Caton, 2006), Reisinger and Steiner (2006, p. 74) go on to suggest provocatively that object authenticity should be abandoned:

Members of the academic community in this field are well within their power and rights to declare that from this day forward, the term authenticity and authentic will never again be applied to objects in tourism research.

However, given the observation that the debate on authenticity has not yet completely abandoned the concept’s object-related roots, tourism scholars have not heeded Reisinger and Steiner’s (2006) call. Indeed, research on existential authenticity, compared to that related to object authenticity, remains quite scanty, in the context of tourist experience. In this thesis I attempt to examine both existential authenticity, and object authenticity. Thus while I do not totally embrace Reisinger and Steiner’s suggestion in this instance, I do acknowledge the importance of seeing beyond objects, when examining notions of authenticity in touristic experience. However, my tale is context-centred, and culture-informed, hence, it generates local theory, which is still valuable for examining the authenticity grand narrative.
To fully understand the notion of authenticity as it is conceptualised in tourism theory, it is also important to explore the related concept of “culture commodification”. Indeed, the two concepts are often conflated, because, for some scholars, the packaging of culture by commercial tourism enterprise leads to commodification, which in turn results in the loss of authenticity (Lacy & Douglas, 2002; Wall & Xie, 2005). The problem with this view of cultural tourism consumption, however, is that it overlooks the potential benefits that may accrue to the relevant local cultures. Still, culture commodification requires some critical treatment.

2.4 Culture Commodification

To state that tourism, by nature, and in all its guises, is a business, is to state the obvious (Lacy & Douglass, 2002). Lacy and Douglass (2002) add that tourism, like cultural identity, rests on the construction of image as purveyed to others, even though these images may often be contradictory, contested or ignored. Lacy & Douglas are highlighting the commercial packaging of culture in tourism. An often cited article on the subject of culture commodification and its impacts is Greenwood’s (1978) work: *Culture by the Pound: An anthropological perspective on tourism as culture commoditization*, in which he explores the commodification of the Alarde, a major public ritual of the Spanish community of Fuenterrabia. About the Alarde, he asserts the ritual had become a performance for money; its meaning was lost, and,

By ordaining that the Alarde be a public event to attract outsiders into the town to spend money, the municipal government...directly violated the meaning of the ritual, definitively destroying its authenticity and its power for the people...Culture is being packaged, priced, and sold like...fast food...Treating culture as a natural resource or a commodity over which tourists have rights is not simply perverse, it is a violation of people’s cultural rights...Thus commoditization of culture in effect robs people of the very meanings by which they organize their lives...That is the final perversity. (1978, pp. 135-137)
The discourse of culture commodification is obviously relevant to this thesis, given the representations of local culture in commercial Victoria Falls restaurants. As I have already outlined, culture is packaged in eatertainment venues to lure tourists towards what is presented as a “unique cultural experience”. Tourists pay to consume this experience. Cultural commodification is intricately linked to authenticity quests, because it is in often in the context of commodified culture, paradoxically, that tourists are understood to seek authentic cultural objects. This is certainly true about Victoria Falls. Indeed, the packaging of Indigenous culture in tourist venues, and for tourist consumption, is a ubiquitous phenomenon, in Africa and beyond.

Research on cultural staging or commodification in tourist hospitality, however, remains scanty, although there are some notable studies. For example, Desmond (1999) examines the staging of tourism in Hawaii, where, increasingly, hotels augment their products and services with the staging of local culture. Desmond (1999, p. 16) provides several examples of overt cultural packaging by Hawaaiian hotels, which resonate on many levels with what I will describe as occurring in Victoria Falls eatertainment:

The Venerable Ala Moana Hotel recently introduced a new program designed “to offer guests a chance to learn about the Islands’ unique culture through a variety of displays and demonstrations.” On Fridays and Sundays the Moana’s neo-colonial style lobby is turned over to demonstrations of lau hala weaving and displays of leis, hula implements, and malos (loincloths)…And on Maui, the well-respected and very popular kumu hula and singer Keali’i Reichel was invited in 1995 to use the Maui Intercontinental Hotel as a rehearsal site for his dancers, so that live culture would be integrated into the physical space of the tourist sphere.

As already indicated, in most scholarly tourism discourse, commodification is often conflated with (the loss of) authenticity because there is a perception that commodification represents the violation of a threshold or sacred boundary (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003; Chang, 2006; Dorsey, Steeves, & Porras, 2004;
Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). There is a perception that when cultural products are
packaged, priced and sold to tourists, the priority, as Steiner and Reisinger (2006)
argue, is “on sales and profit, not on authentic experiences of different cultures”
(2006, p. 312). As such, most studies explicitly or implicitly couple commodification with (loss of) authenticity (Abbink, 2009;; Xie, 2003a; Goulding,
2000; Selwyn, 1996; Urry, 1990).

Within a commodification discourse is the view that the touristic quest for
authenticity is doomed to failure, because all tourists can access is a staged authenticity — an inevitable result of the commodification process (Kim & Jamal,
2007). According to Kim and Jamal (2007, p.182), a “commodity-driven industry
underlaid with market capitalism produces a false touristic consciousness and is the
epitome of modernity”. In particular, critical theorists adopt the position that
anything that is created for commercial purposes loses its authenticity; its intrinsic
meaning and value (Halewood & Hannam, 2001; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Shepherd,
2002; Watt, 2000). There is general consensus among the majority of scholars that
the way products are packaged, promoted, and sold leads to harmful
commercialization of destinations, product commodification, and disintegration of
local cultures (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 310).

However some authors take a more lenient perspective toward the commercial
packaging of culture in tourism, citing its potential contribution to maintenance of
cultural traditions and practices that may otherwise become obsolete (Conran, 2006).
They argue that while commodifying culture often entails “replicating” an “original”
for tourist consumption, as Hall (2007) argues, replication is not necessarily bad.
Rather, what is critical is the different “experiential depth”, that is, “historical depth,
spatial depth, cultural depth, environmental depth, educational depth” that exists
between the original and the replication (Hall, 2007, p. 1140). The latter may indeed
be the only way in which the tourist can experience the original.

There is a general persuasion, however, among scholars that pre-capitalist, pre-
global, unMcDonaldized cultures must be protected from the insidious influences of
modern capitalist enterprise, especially from its touristic guise/gaze (Conran, 2006).
This can be seen as a postcolonial critical theorisation which sees the West as aspiring to freeze “exotic” cultures, and to dictate the pace of development of postcolonial communities. This argument will be explored in more depth in my discussion of relevant postcolonial theory later in this chapter.

**Indicia of Commodification**

Adapting Radin’s (1996) indicia of commodification for cultural tourism products, the indicators of commodification can be stated as:

- objectification (ascribing to some aspect of the cultural representation the status of a thing that can be manipulated at the discretion of individuals);
- fungibility (interchangeability of this cultural thing with no loss of value to the holder);
- commensurability (it must be possible to measure or rank the thing); and,
- money equivalence (ascribing monetary value to the thing).

Thus in Radin’s view, it is possible to conceive of a commodification continuum on which some aspects of culture are less commodified than others. On this continuum, commodification is higher as we move from experiential culture (for example a dance performance) to “physical” culture (such as a handicraft). The enduring question surrounding commodification of culture, however, is whether or not it is a positive or negative thing. Of course, the answer is not a simple “yes” or “no”, as Lacy and Douglass (2002, p. 17) observe in their study of the commodification of Basque identity:

Nor do we find such commodification to be intrinsically negative or positive. We would argue that, like most human activity, touristic commodification does not lend itself to such Manichean evaluation. Indeed, from our analysis it seems clear that agency in the formulation, promotion and consumption (the tourist) of the tourism site/sight is not only extraordinarily complex, but
also highly sensitive to wider, macrostructural economic and political influences.

Whether commodification should be viewed as good or bad depends on a multitude of contextual variables. While it would be very convenient to have access to yes-and-no type answers in this relation, the reality is that commodification is entangled within cultural, economic, social, political, ecological and legal imperatives which can only allow qualified standpoints.

Perhaps because of the complexity of the subject and its practical implications, interest in tourism commodification of culture continues to grow (Abbink, 2009; Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003; Hunter, 2011; Walsh, 1996). As images of ethnic peoples are increasingly used to attract tourists to a wide range of cultural attractions settings such as heritage sites, galleries, folk villages, cultural themes parks, and festivals, this trend is perpetuated (Yang, 2011). Within the venues of commodification, the elusive dimensions of power, identity, meaning, and human behaviour are constructed, negotiated, reconstructed, and renegotiated, based on a multitude of sociocultural forces (Lacy & Douglass, 2002; Martin, 2010; Yang, 2011). As noted earlier, there is a lack of research on cultural commodification focusing specifically on African tourist eatertainment contexts, which gap this study partially addresses.

2.5 Food Culture, Tourism and Authenticity

The importance of food in tourism experiences is widely acknowledged (Alonso, 2011; Azarya, 2004; Beer, 2008; Buergermeister, 1988; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Molz, 2007; Mura & Lovelock, 2009; Tikkanen, 2007). The role of food as part of a destination’s appeal is also clearly manifested in the growth of food/gastronomic/culinary tourism as well as research on the trend (Hall, 2006; Harrington & Ottenbacher; Horng & Tsai; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2009; Smith & Costello, 2009; Smith & Xiao, 2008). Many people, branded as “foodies”, travel to eat but, more interestingly, many also eat to travel by consuming foreign foods at home (du Rand, Heath, & Alberts, 2003; Magnini, Miller, & Kim, 2011; Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012; Molz, 2007; Quan & Wang,
It is important, however, to distinguish food tourism, where food is a primary motivator for travel, and the consumption of food as part of a travel experience, where food experience is a secondary or lower order motivator (Dundes & Swann, 2008; Fox, 2007; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Henderson, 2009; Heung, 2000; Kneafsey, 2000; Okumus, et al., 2007). However, for some tourists, there could be more than one primary motivator, so that what qualifies a travel experience as “food tourism” should only be that the opportunity for memorable food and drink adventures contributes significantly to travel motivation and behaviour (Che, 2006; Harrington & Ottenbacher; Oakes, 1999; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007; Sims, 2009).

Food is an important cultural marker. It is a multidimensional cultural artefact which represents much more than an economic commodity (Everett, 2008). For example, Oakes (1999, p. 125) writes about the role of food in Chinese culture: it (food) “is used to mark ethnicity, place of birth, social status, cultural change and all calendar and family events. It is the clearest means of articulating social relationships”. Food mediates the relationship between place and identity, and between the material and the symbolic (Everett, 2008; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Sims, 2009). As such, food is increasingly accepted as a communicator of meaning and, eating exotic and global foodstuffs has become an important part of a new postmodern culture (Everett, 2008).

Eating food in tourism space is an embodied experience, far beyond Urry’s (1990) “tourist gaze”; that is, food experiences in tourism are not restricted to a visual consumptive engagement (Everett, 2008). Seeing tourism through the lens of food tourism exposes the limitations of the predominant orientation in literature that sees tourism through a lens of visuality which has privileged gazing, sightseeing, and aesthetics over other embodied senses, tacitly implying a disembodied, detached tourist (Molz, 2007). Critics of the gaze theory favour looking at tourists’ behaviour as multisensory, experiential and embodied performance (Markwell, 2001; Veijola & Jokinen, 1994; Veijola & Valtonen, 2007).

Eating, especially in tourism, and when it involves “strange” and “dangerous” foods such as “chicken feet, fish head curry, baby bee larvae, snake, or blowfish”
represents both a physical and intellectual openness to difference, an adventurous curiosity, willingness to risk, and a desire to consume contrast (Molz, 2007, p. 85). Food is then a way of demarcating, defining, redefining, and negotiating corporeal and cultural boundaries (Appadurai, 1981; Groves, 2001; Lu & Fine, 1995). In food tourism, therefore, tourists can perform the self as adventurous, curious, and open to unusual possibility; it always involves on their part a degree of surrender and vulnerability.

Food in tourism can also become a substitute for actual engagement with locals; it is a way to assert the normality of the tourist’s own culture. As Molz (2007) argues, culinary adventures into another culture are less about a sustained engagement with that specific culture than they are about underlining a symbolic distinction that raises the tourist’s status back home. An important and relevant model for conceptualising touristic (food) experience is that provided by Quan and Wang (2004, p. 301), in which they distinguish two dimensions, namely, “food as peak touristic experiences’, and “food as the extension of the ontological comfort of home”. In the case of the former, tourists seek food experiences that are outside of their daily routine, that is, novel food experiences. Food becomes a memorable experience, characterised by “highest happiness and fulfilment” (Maslow, 1968, p. 73). In the latter case, on the other hand, food is consumed simply as a necessary reality of daily life. For Quan and Wang, what makes food consumption peak touristic experience is motivation and memorability. In peak experiences of food, it (food) ceases to be merely a supporting consumer experience, and instead becomes the peak experience itself, or an important part of it. As an extension of the ontological comfort of home (Quan & Wang, 2004), food is a reassuring element to tourists in the face of anxieties caused by being in an unfamiliar environment.

Li et al (2011) note that many destinations now use food to strengthen their tourism appeal; that a unique “food identity” can contribute significantly to that destination’s competitiveness. Increasingly, travel agencies customise holiday packages to cater for travellers who value food adventure as an important element of their tourism experience (Molz, 2007). Places such as Italy, France, Thailand, Melbourne, Sydney, and Hong Kong, are marketed as gastronomic destinations (Karim & Chi;
Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Kneafsey, 2000; Molz, 2007; Oakes, 1999; Sims, 2009). It is understood that food in tourism can offer indulgent, multisensory, memorable experiences (Everett, 2008). Food can play an important role in destination branding, because it is often intricately linked with the destination’s social, cultural, and natural characteristics. It can be used to convey an image of authentic, embodied consumption that is appealing to modern travellers (Everett, 2008).

According to Lin et al. (2011), food has the ability to enhance the sustainability and authenticity of a destination, strengthen its economy and establish the hospitality of a region. Local restaurants, food and beverage outlets and wineries can become intertwined with the destination image perceived by tourists (Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Kneafsey, 2000; Lin et al., 2011). Food is therefore a powerful vehicle for conveying deep-rooted cultural meanings and emblems (Elmont, 1995; Molz, 2007; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Lin, et al., 2011; Oakes, 1999; Smith & Costello, 2009). It is a transportable symbol of place and cultural identity; a movable Other or sign of Otherness (Molz, 2007). In culinary experiences therefore, tourists have the opportunity to taste, or to eat, the Other; to eat difference (Aitchison, 2001; Ateljevic, et al., 2005; Caton & Santos, 2009; Molz, 2007). Thus in tourism,

...food operates within a symbolic economy that trades on Otherness, the exotic, the strange, difference, and novelty as they are about eating as a material encounter. In this sense, culinary tourism is always relative and what counts as the “Other,” “different,” “exotic,” or “novel” can only be named in relation to what it is ‘Other,” or “different” from. In this sense, culinary tourism is also always specific, depending on who is eating, who is feeding, the cultural context of consumption, and the kinds of power relations that are produced across the table (Molz, 2007, p. 78).

2.6 Food and authenticity

The food at a destination bears on the tourist’s perception of local distinctiveness (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Kneafsey, 2000; Lin, et al.,
According to Prentice (2001, p. 16), culinary experiences in tourism offer “authentication by direct experience”. In the literature, the authenticity of food is seen as referring to a “genuine” version of a product in relation to a particular geographical and cultural space (Groves, 2001; Robinson & Clifford, 2007). Authentication markers for food include nomenclature, labelling and packaging, as well as personal factors such as the tourist’s personal cultural capital (Robinson & Clifford, 2007). Thus food can enhance or diminish the perceived authenticity of a tourist’s restaurant experience (Robinson & Clifford, 2007). Traditional meals in tourism experiences have immense symbolic value, as they offer a sensory window into the culture, history, and people of a region, and local specialities are viewed as authentic, based on a stereotyped dichotomy of what is considered to be authentic or inauthentic within a given context (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009).

Perceived authenticity of food can be enhanced through various means, including: associating the food with a specific place; using local/vernacular terminology to name or describe dishes; associating the food with particular persons; or associating the food with historical or heritage events (Hughes, 1995; Robinson & Clifford, 2007). The association between food and place is typically communicated via provenance markers, emphasising originality (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009). Foodservice suppliers package their products to fit tourists’ expectations of genuineness, authentic and aesthetic appeal (Elmont, 1995; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009; Hall & Shariples, 2003; Molz, 2007; Oakes, 1999). In tourism, the importance of the link between food and place is demonstrated in part by the interest among tourists in “local food”. However, understanding what “local food” means is problematic as people use subjective criteria to assess locality (Sims, 2010). Whatever “local food” means, however, according to Sims (2009), consuming local food provides access to both object and existential authenticity.

Some foods are appealing to authenticity-seeking tourists because they are seen as scary, unknown, strange, and anxiety-triggering (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009). Some tourists seek out “scary food” to signify their openness to risk and adventure. These tourists epitomise neophilia, which refers to a love of tasting novel and untried dishes (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). On the other extreme is neophobia, which
describes abhorrence of unfamiliarity (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009). The possible range of reactions to unknown food, ranging from yucky! to yummy! (Molz, 2007), symbolise the risk inherent in tasting unknown food.

A useful framework for understanding culinary tourist quests is that provided by Hjalager (2004), drawn from Cohen’s (1979) phenomenology of touristic experiences. This model groups tourists into four categories, namely, existential, experimental, recreational, and diversionary gastronomic tourists. According to Halager, existential gastronomic tourists seek not only to taste foreign food and beverage, but also to learn about it in depth. They desire, in Kivela & Crotts’ (2006) view, unsophisticated, inexpensive, peasant food and beverage that is prepared “authentically”, that is, traditionally. Experimental gastronomic tourists on the other hand seek to try out novel ways of eating and preparing food. They are therefore interested in the latest food fads and trends. Recreational gastronomic tourists care little about authenticity, and instead search for familiar cuisine; thus they will often opt for self-catering while in foreign places. Finally, diversionary gastronomic tourists prefer to eat in popular chain-style restaurants; they value quantity rather than quality of food. They dislike exotic foods (Kivela & Crotts, 2006), and, by inference, are indifferent to authenticity. Henderson (2009) argues that there is a continuum of commitment among tourists in relation to actively seeking food experiences in tourism. This means that activities such as sampling and learning about food are pursued by those with more serious, special interest in food tourism, while other tourists have a more casual attitude.

In the context of tourist experience, however, it is important to note that authenticity quests and perceptions, whether or not they relate to food, are embedded in politics. They represent an appropriation and projection of authority over a particular cultural facet of the toured destination or touristic experience. The agency of those who represent culture in touristic space also arises from the manner in which power is amassed. Thus it is important to understand not only authenticity, but also authentication, which encapsulates the power dynamics involved in the search for, and possible experience of authenticity. By examining authentication processes, the
questions of who, and by what means, authorises culture as authentic or inauthentic, if not answered entirely, can, at least, be acknowledged and perhaps partially answered.

2.7 Authentication

As already indicated, very little research has explored the underlying power dynamics in relation to the authenticity status of toured objects, which may be summed up in the term “authentication”. Understanding authentication in cultural tourism experiences requires identifying where power lies, that is, the politics of the tourism’s cultural representations. According to Ryan (2003), the key political questions are related to who authorises cultural representations, where the power lies, who receives income and how much of it, beyond asking whether a performance is “authentic”. In a similar vein of argument, Wall and Xie (2005) understand the examination of cultural authority as invariably informed by the question “who authenticates?” (Wall & Xie, 2005), because, as already established under the constructivist school, authenticity is not an inherent attribute of an object or experience, but one that is ascribed onto the object. Authentication relates to that ascription of status. Thus in any discussion of authenticity, it is necessary to determine in the first instance who has the right to make an authenticity judgement. As discussed earlier, according to Wall and Xie:

Answers to this question involve the identification of key players (stakeholders) and the criteria that they employ for making their assessments of authenticity. It ultimately involves addressing issues of power and authority. Nevertheless, the attribution of authenticity is important because it involves the conferment of status. The designation of something as authentic may also be associated with the assessment of what is appropriate and the exercise of power, making an understanding of the process of authentication of considerable significance (2005, p. 2).
Two Kinds of authentication: Hot and Cool

For decades, many tourism scholars have expressed the need to move beyond examining perceptions and definitions of authenticity, towards exploring the processes and politics of authentication in touristic experiences of toured objects (Ryan, 1997, 2003; Wall & Xie, 2005). Very few researchers responded to this suggestion with any success, so that to date, most tourism researchers have continued to analyse authenticity in terms of its subjective definitions, approaches, and perceptions (for example Beer, 2008; Chhabra, 2010; Connell, 2007; Cook, 2010; Magnini, Miller, & Kim, 2011; Waitt, 2000; Wall & Xie, 2005; Wang, 1999; 2000; Xie & Wall, 2002; Yang & Wall, 2009). This is understandable, as mere description of subjective authenticity evaluations and experiences is arguably much easier than questioning the underlying politics of authentication or authorisation.

In relation to authentication, Cohen and Cohen (2012) have made a substantive, and arguably, the most explicit contribution. In their article “Authentication: Hot and cool”, they confront the authentication of toured objects very directly, distinguishing two kinds, namely, “hot” authentication, and “cool” authentication (emphasis added). Their conceptualisation of authentication (summarised in Table 2.1), is a positive step towards the propulsion of authenticity theory beyond the somewhat stale contentions over conflicting schools of thought, and subjective perceptions of authenticity. Cohen and Cohen (2012) provide a clear nexus between objects that are held as authentic or inauthentic, and subjects who ascribe authenticity or inauthenticity to them. It is therefore a bold attempt on their part to explain an especially elusive, but nonetheless, real process, which informs tourist encounters with toured cultural and other objects, tangible and otherwise.

What is particularly useful about Cohen and Cohen’s (2012) theorisation is the clarity of definitions that the work provides on authentication and its subcategories. This is essential, if the ambiguity of definitions that has surrounded authenticity and related terms is to be avoided. Cohen and Cohen (2012, p. 1296) define authentication as the “social process by which the authenticity of an attraction is confirmed” (emphasis in original).
Table 2.1: Two kinds of authentication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Cool authentication</th>
<th>Hot authentication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basis of authority</td>
<td>Scientific knowledge claims, expertise, proof</td>
<td>Belief, commitment, devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>Authorized person or institutions</td>
<td>No single identifiable agent, performative conduct of attending public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Formal criteria, accepted procedures</td>
<td>Diffuse and incremental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of public</td>
<td>Low, observer</td>
<td>High, imbricated, participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>Declaration, certification, accreditation</td>
<td>Ritual, offerings, communal support, resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporality</td>
<td>Single act, static</td>
<td>Gradual, dynamic, accumulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducive to personal experiences of</td>
<td>Objective authenticity</td>
<td>Existential authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance</td>
<td>Dependent on credibility of agent</td>
<td>Reiterative, requires continual (re)enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on dynamics of attraction</td>
<td>Stagnating effect, fossilization</td>
<td>Augmentative and transformative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Cohen & Cohen (2012)

Therefore, in their view, understanding authentication entails identifying who has the power to ascribe authenticity to tourist attractions. They distinguish the two kinds of authentication as follows: “cool” authentication is a single, explicit, typically formal or even official, performative (speech) act, by which the authenticity of an object, site, event, custom, role or person is declared to be
original, real or genuine, as opposed to being a copy, fake, or spurious. “Hot authentication, on the other hand, is described as an “immanent, reiterative, informal performative process of creating, preserving and reinforcing an object’s, site’s or event’s authenticity” (Cohen & Cohen, 2012, p. 1300).

Clearly, “cool” authentication interacts closely with an objectivist approach to the attribution of authenticity, while “hot” authentication is more aligned with the experience of authenticity as mediated by subjective perceptions. In consideration of its merits, outlined above, I adopt Cohen and Cohen’s approach as the primary framework for analysing authentication processes relevant to eatertainment experiences in Victoria Falls, which I report on in Chapter 5.

2.8 Authenticity and Postcolonial Discourses Of Othering

What is Othering?

Authenticity seeking entails Othering: searching for an authentic Other, in addition to searching for an authentic Self. Othering is the tendency to define oneself through contrast with other places and peoples, often ascribing superiority over the Other to oneself (Aitchison, 2001). Tourism is implicated in Othering because it is the quintessential industry of difference and “quaint Otherness” (Amoamo & Thompson, 2010; McRae, 2003). The industry feeds on and promotes an increasing obsession with the peripheral in terms of its exhibition of “primitive” peoples as the object of Western curiosity (Azarya, 2004). It is an industry which “invites first world western tourists to consume third world places and people as pleasure products” (Aitchison, 2001, p. 135). As McRae (2003) states, the tourist and the tourist studies scholar are continually corralled by the eye of empire that sought to gaze upon and objectify “exotic Others”. In most discourses related to tourism, people in the West are theorised as searching for the different, remote, or the exotic (Aitchison, 2001; Azarya, 2004). For them (Western tourists), it is argued, the idea that primitive societies have preserved an authenticity lost to modern subjects builds a nostalgic fascination with the Other (McRae, 2003). Stereotypical Third World
lifestyles represent for many tourists “a backward stage of human development, some remnants of a disappearing world” (Azarya, 2004, p. 956).

There are socio-political consequences which flow from the Othering tendencies. McRae (2003) notes that the continued process of Othering has created a nostalgic authenticity dialogue in which non-modern cultures are not allowed to progress, to grow or change. Instead they are placed in stasis for the West’s nostalgic pleasure. The tourists themselves are flexible; they are allowed to change and grow. McRae suggests that Indigenous peoples must have the right of self determination, which means that they must be allowed “to breathe and bleed on their own terms” rather than according to a Western ideology of “parental condescension towards difference” (2003, p. 240).

However, Othering is not simply about the West Othering the peoples in developing countries. Indeed, it is a complex, multidirectional phenomenon, which can also exist as self-Othering. For example, Bunten (2008) broaches the related concepts of self-exoticisation, self-commodification and the commodified persona. For Bunten, self-exoticisation occurs when the native presents “a simplified version of the self that conforms to Western concepts of the Other” popularised in the mass media (2008, pp. 386-389). This, I would suggest, is a form of self-Othering. Bunten writes:

> By exoticizing themselves as the Other using Western ideologies of what being Native American looks like, sounds like, and means, tour guides effectively alienate the commodified persona that they construct from themselves through the performance of an allegory of Native identity...What is significant about polyvocal alternations of identity culled from a repertoire of possibilities is the highly sophisticated manner in which tour guides invoke and manage more than one set of identities...From what I observed, the self-conscious, critically aware tour guides who constantly tailor their presentations are the ones who truly enjoy their jobs. Not surprisingly, these guides are the most popular among tourists, earning the most tips, the highest ratings, and word-of-mouth repeat customers.
Bunten (2008, p. 390), however, also notes that “natives” may simultaneously resist stereotypes that “see them as part of the timeless past by presenting themselves as firmly entrenched in modernity”. Thus the commodified personae manipulate their self-representation. They can carve out their own image in tourism exchanges. Othered peoples are therefore also complicit, and partly antagonistic, within the Othering behaviours in touristic experience.

**Postcolonial theory**

In tourism studies, the discourses of Othering are captured critically in postcolonial theorising. Postcolonial theory challenges the legacies of colonialism in contemporary institutions, such as tourism, and questions the West’s covert presumption that “we are human and they are not” (Caton & Santos, 2009, p. 193). The postcolonial school recognises that power distribution between the “West and the Rest” is skewed in favour of the former; the latter is marginalised to the periphery. Therefore postcolonial theory offers a lens for interrogating authenticity in the specific context of tourism theory critically. The relevance of postcolonial theory to this thesis also derives from my view of Africans as subalterns, and my advocacy of an epistemology of insiderness in tourism studies of the Other.

Indeed, postcolonialism and tourism are inextricably interwoven because many former colonies such as Zimbabwe have become popular tourist destinations (Amoamo & Thompson, 2010). Further, a postcolonial perspective is increasingly important to tourism research as the discipline continues on a critical trajectory (Alonso, O'Neill, & Kim, 2010; Ateljevic, et al., 2005; Gotham, 2002; Hollinshead, 2006; Tribe, 2008). As Osagie and Buzinde (2011, p. 210) highlight:

> Scholarship of this nature is an important shift that takes tourism studies beyond the empirical emphasis resident in the applied business approach to a representational configuration characteristic of deconstruction methodologies ...such as poststructuralism, feminism, and postcolonial studies.

The emerging critical paradigm of postcolonial research provides a lens through which the nuances and complexities of tourism, especially in developing countries,
can be better articulated and embedded within a decolonising agenda (Osagie & Buzinde, 2011, p. 211). As such there is a call to examine the touristic field of representation for its hybridity and ambiguity, with a view to communicate social markers that dislocate grand narratives of the imperial project (Osagie & Buzinde, 2011). However, some postcolonial critics continue to debate the temporality of the postcolonial era, arguing that it is too early to refer to postcolonialism, which implies the demise of colonialism, when the latter has only been replaced by neocolonialism (Osagie & Buzinde, 2011). This is, in many aspects, a valid argument, although I would suggest that while the remnants of colonialism might still exist in many guises, it is legitimate to conceive of a postcolonial era, because the institutions of colonialism have lost their overt, legislated control, on many levels.

Postcolonial theory is a useful critical framework because it is sensitive to the fact that “natives” are often stereotypically portrayed as “noble savages” barely surviving in inefficient, apathy-ridden and corrupt postcolonial states. Modernity, on the other hand, and in direct contrast, is seen as a European project which is assumed to be worth aspiring to, for all peoples (Musila, 2008). While other critical approaches have drawn attention to the imbalances of power inherent in tourism, postcolonial theorists have been the most vehement. The tourism industry is also seen also as a form of “defacto social and economic apartheid” (Gibson, 2009, p. 530), a hegemonic space reaffirming dominant power structures; it demands that third world cultures remain Othered (Jamal & Kim, 2005; McRae, 2003). The industry is also viewed as relying on representations that often are problematic because they reinforce stereotypes that privilege dominant groups at the expense of Others (Caton & Santos, 2009), because colonialist tropes that depict the Other as mysterious, backward, and deviant, are perpetually produced and reproduced.

In relation to tourism, and at the centre of the postcolonial movement’s concerns, is the implicit colonization embedded in the movement of Western tourists to developing countries to gaze on “primitives”, and in the process, to acquire a validation of their own normativity, effectively producing a dominant-subordinate relationship, which vests them (that is, Western tourists) with agency and
responsibility (McRae, 2003). Postcolonial theorists have addressed the primal myths and stereotypes of inferiority imposed on third world countries (Osagie & Buzinde, 2011). As Musila (2008, p. 119) argues, imaginings of Africa stereotype the destination as a crisis ridden continent, teeming with disease, poverty, violence, corruption, and so forth. Ironically, at the same time, it is also portrayed as a tourist’s paradise, with a broad range of wildlife, spectacular landscapes, and exotic cultural attractions.

Postcolonialists have also lamented the coloniality of citizenship resulting from tourism. For example, Fanon (1967) points out that the national bourgeoisie of tourism in developing countries effectively set up their countries as the “brothel” of Europe, because they go to great lengths to satisfy the whims of their Western visitors, even at the expense of their own people. Host nations, to remain relevant to the tourist market, find themselves masking any identities, practices and beliefs that the tourist might find distasteful, a situation which represents a “prostitution” of culture (McRae, 2003).

Kamugisha (2007) argues similarly that tourism is blatantly neo-colonialist, and third world governments are complicit in the commodification of their own cultures, because, by setting up the commonplace tourist bubbles, they create “extra-territorial citizenship” for tourists. This, he argues, is unfortunately done with a tremendous amount of epistemic, and occasionally physical, violence done to the host nation’s own citizens. Even after the departure of tourists, efforts are continually made to entice them to return. Tourists therefore, in a socio-political sense, yield virtually all the agency to see their needs and wants met, if they can pay the financial price, thus the analogies of prostitution and brothels.

**Epistemic violence**

Eurocentric knowledge creation in tourism has continued to show disinterest in non-Western tourists, even to deny that tourists can be non-Western (Hazbun, 2009). Hazbun (2009, p. 204) further notes that when tourism scholars refer to tourism in non-Western contexts, they tend to do so in the Western sense of the term; that tourism studies has been confined to a “European-centred cartography”, to a singular
history and a modernity with an autocratic image of itself as the depiction of universal certainty. As a result, many postcolonial tourism researchers have highlighted the Western-centric origin of tourism studies’ grand theories. Among them, authenticity is implicated in this critique of theories which have been “framed from the perspective of the, often removed, Western researcher and thus does not take into account the local issues as articulated, lived, and dealt with by the locals” (Osagie & Buzinde, 2011, p. 211).

While authenticity theory is accepted in some form or other by most tourism scholars (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), some critical authors, chiefly postcolonialists, have started to question its applicability in non-Western cultures. Nyiri (2006), for instance, successfully illustrates how this theory has limited validity in an Eastern (Chinese) context. To correct the underrepresentation of “subalterns” in tourism theory, Osagie & Buzinde argue that tourism theory must embrace a critical turn that dislodges grand narratives which assume universal validity across cultural divides. Spivak’s (1988) term “epistemic violence”, draws attention to the situation where, in the process of knowledge creation, subaltern voices are muted, or ventriloquized; that is, not allowed to speak on their own terms.

This epistemic violence, as illustrated in the scantiness of an African voice in the creation of tourism knowledge, constitutes the most pertinent literature gap for this study. This is clearly a very wide gap which no single study can fill. I have already indicated that in most empirical tourism studies, Africans have been stereotypically cast as “touree”, yet increasingly they have also taken on the role of tourist. Tourism scholars have not dedicated any substantial page space to the voice of African tourists; and so the subjective experiences of Africans in tourism remain largely unknown.

Most studies on authenticity in tourism, outside Western contexts, have focused on perceptions of authenticity among Western tourists, who are also arguably the least qualified to pass any “objective” authenticity judgement, based on the simple reasoning that they are relatively unfamiliar with the toured cultures. Only a few studies have incorporated the perspectives of domestic tourists in a non-Western
context. Most of these studies have been conducted in Asia (examples include Cole, 2007; Li, 2009; Yang & Wall, 2009), but not Africa. There is also a frequent tendency in authenticity related studies to treat tourists as a homogeneous population (Chhabra, 2010; Waitt, 2000), with the result that nuances that arise from variations in cultural background, age, gender, ethnicity, and education, for instance, are overlooked.

Using the eighth moment rationale (I return to a brief discussion of this later), it is legitimate to argue that the majority of authenticity enthusiasts, by assuming that authenticity theory as it stands is valid across cultures, have failed to provide a critical appraisal of the assumptions that underpin existing knowledge, and have as a result ruled out the possibility of highlighting possible inflection points that may emerge in critical investigations, especially those that redirect the focus to non-Western tourists and other non-Western stakeholders in the global tourism industry.

**Discourses of Indigeneity and Africanness/Zimbabweaness**

Understanding Indigeneity (Crampton, 2011; Escárcega, 2010; Glynn & Tyson, 2007; Hartley, 2004; Mullaney, 2007; Paradies, 2006), in the African/Zimbabwean context is critical for appreciating the contestation of cultural authenticity in tourist entertainment, or indeed in any cultural context. It provides a working definition of what it means to be an Indigenous African, as well as what it means to belong to, and be associated with African identity. Understanding how such identity is confronted and contested is crucial, because the contestation of authenticity is informed by the politics of identity (Afiff & Lowe, 2007; Atkinson, Taylor, & Walter, 2010; Buddle, 2004; Butler-McIlwraith, 2006; 1999; Valdivia, 2007; Wilson, 2008; Wyn & Harris, 2004; Zenker, 2011).

However, the term “Indigenous” is difficult to define. The United Nations, by resolution, (Escárcega, 2010), defined Indigenous peoples as those having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, and who form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity. With reference to Africa, Nyamnjoh (2007, p.
1) writes that Africa offers fascinating examples of how the term “Indigenous” has been arbitrarily employed in the service of colonizing forces, of how peoples have had recourse to Indigeneity in their struggles against colonialism, and of how groups vying for resources and power amongst themselves have deployed competing claims to Indigeneity in relation to one another. According to Andreasson (2010, p. 3), Indigeneity in Zimbabwe (and South Africa) is a heavily contested issue:

A relational or processional conceptualisation of Indigeneity provides an understanding of Indigenous peoples as being primarily defined by: the relation of dominance of one group over another, and especially the relation of different groups to the state, where the state is perceived as protecting the values of non-Indigenous over Indigenous peoples...Dominance by one group over another is partly the reason for an ‘ontological uncertainty’ about belonging which leads to violence...This definition of Indigeneity, focusing on the experience of having been dominated, lends itself to political mobilisation. Indigeneity in South Africa and Zimbabwe defines the role of African majorities vis-à-vis white minorities, thus becoming an instrument of empowerment policies. Whether white South Africans and Zimbabweans can be considered African is an ongoing debate.

Indigeneity is a multifaceted concept which is about previously colonised peoples reasserting themselves (Andreasson, 2010; Rutherford, 2010; Shaw, 2002; Singh, 2011; Spencer, 2007; Taylor & Wetherell). It “spills over into a contemporary post-colonial politics” in which the contestation of power increasingly draws on notions of Africanness as an indicator of Indegeneity and the attendant rights to govern” (Andreasson, 2010, p. 3). The politics of Indigeneity can thus be seen as acts of decolonisation that need to be contested and negotiated (Escárcega, 2010; Jeffries & Bond, 2009; Jeffries & Bond, 2010; Johnson, 2008; Karlsson, 2003).

Paradies (2006, p. 357) highlights the interpellation of Indigenous people without regard to individual characteristics, through a plethora of stereotyped images, and based on tropes of exclusivity, cultural alterity, marginality, physicality and morality. For Singh (2011), in contrast to the typical stereotyped portrayal of
Indigenous people as victims and residual survivors of state violence, increasingly, Indigenous peoples are seeking identity reconstruction and self-representation. In Zimbabwe, the contestation and appropriation of Indegeneity, particularly among the Shona and Ndebele peoples, is an ongoing powerful example of the complexity of the politics of ethnic origins.

2.9 Reflecting on the Literature: A Summary of Biases and Gaps

The review of literature brings to the fore several gaps and biases in the literature. First, I argued that there is a clear dominance of a Westerncentric theory of authenticity in tourism, both in terms of the role of authenticity in tourism, and the perception of authenticity in tourist experience. As subalterns, African tourists (and indeed, Africans in general) have not been provided with a voice in the creation of tourism knowledge, and thus we have here an epistemic gap, arising from the “West and the Rest” cultural hegemony. This gap is the primary focus of this study.

The dearth of research on African tourists is partly explained by the relative infancy of tourism as an area of study and research in most African research institutions, and by the scarcity of researching funding on the continent, in general. As more higher educational institutions in Africa launch postgraduate studies in tourism and related fields, an increase in the representation of the African voice, and of African tourists in tourism studies is foreseeable. This is not to say, however, that African tourists can only be studied by African institution. Still, it is logical to expect a substantial proportion of research on African tourists (and other kinds of research which represent African voices, outside tourism), to originate in African institutions. As it is, this kind of research is scanty, irrespective of origin. While postcolonial theorising has provided a useful critical analytical framework for examining the implicit hegemony in consumption patterns modelled on the “West and the Rest”, such critical perspectives are still rare in tourism studies. Indeed, much tourism research is “uncritical”, and continues to present a predominantly Western voice.

I have also shown that while the staging of culture in tourism has been explored widely, very little research of that nature has been carried out an in the context of
eatertainment, or tourist restaurants, in Africa. Tourist eatertainment is a rich context for the exploration of authenticity, as it offers the lens of food, as the symbolic medium of communicating and consuming culture. The universal need to eat, among tourists from all over the world, makes food consumption and eatertainment venues a convenient setting for meeting and observing tourists. Thus, as the context of the present study, eatertainment is endowed with nuances that other cultural tourism contexts might not expose.

Finally, there is a shortage of studies on authentication, which go beyond authenticity perceptions, exploring more deeply the underlying politics through which toured objects are ascribed the quality of authenticity or inauthenticity. In the present thesis, I attempt to design a study which addresses, if modestly, each of the gaps highlighted here, through the explicit voicing of African tourists and local performers at Victoria Falls, the use of netnography to examine the concept of authenticity critically; drawing from postcolonial discourses of Othering to glean perspectives on, and of, the Other; and, situating the research in an eatertainment context, which offers the lens of food and various other symbols of culture, for the critical evaluation of the complex concept that is authenticity.
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the methodology adopted for this thesis. I explain how I triangulate hermeneutic phenomenology with online-based techniques (netnography). I consider the philosophical (ontological and epistemological) underpinnings of the methodology, wherein I explain the resultant nature of knowledge I hope to create in this study as well as my view of reality. In addition, I provide a justification for the methodological choice, emphasising the quest to capture subjective and intersubjective meanings and lived experiences. Further, I detail the process of data generation and analysis, and highlight how I strive for rigour, while acknowledging the challenges which accompany qualitative research in this quest. Finally, I explain the ethical challenges I grappled with as I conducted the study, and my strategies for addressing and circumventing them.

3.2 Background

Prior to the last few decades, positivism was the dominant paradigm in tourism research, a situation which is rather ironic given that much of the early seminal work in tourism was qualitative (for example Boorstin, 1964; Cohen, 1979; Graburn, 1983; MacCannell, 1973). However, as noted by Riley and Love (2000), most of this early qualitative work was underpinned by other disciplines, such as anthropology and sociology, where qualitative research has long been accepted as a legitimate methodological approach. The scholars behind this foundational work may have found it harder to publish their work in tourism journals which were more receptive to statistical survey data and analyses. In recent years, however, qualitative tourism research has grown dramatically, as academics have expressed concerns over the reductionist, anti-subjective orientation of positivism, arguing that it does not allow “for researching human phenomena as holistic and interactive” (Szarycz, 2009, p. 47). Indeed, academics in different fields are increasingly questioning the
“master paradigm” (positivism), and embracing alternative philosophical approaches (Riley & Love, 2000).

Qualitative research is signified by several attributes. It is conducted in a natural setting, and by a human instrument, that is, the researcher (Roy & Chatterjee, 2007; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Qualitative research also involves purposive sampling, because participants are included on the basis of their experience of particular phenomena (Abrams, 2010; Riley & Love, 2000) The analytic method is typically inductive, aimed at identifying emergent patterns in data (Anderson, 1998; Armitage, Holder, & Hodgson, 2004; Braune & Clarke, 2006). However, qualitative design is also often emergent, because qualitative researchers may be unable to predict some elements of the field in which they will conduct their studies, such as the number of participants who might agree to interviews, or the number of participants with whom they will achieve data saturation (Guest et al., 2006).

A substantial proportion of qualitative research takes the form of case study, because such studies are highly context specific, thus generating only local theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Interpretation is idiographic, that is, relating to individual research participants, via their individual narratives (Wall, Devine-Wright, & Mill, 2008). Because of the high degree of context-specificity, qualitative research has predetermined boundaries/scope, to allow for in-depth investigation of phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Rather than relying on the positivist standards of reliability and validity, qualitative researchers apply special criteria for rigour, such as trustworthiness and transferability, because they seek to explore meanings rather than measurement (Golafshani, 2003; Holloway, Brown, & Shipway, 2010; Walsh & Downe, 2006). Qualitative researchers also use a variety of data sources and techniques, including personal experience and introspection (reflexive and reflective practice), life history, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts, to describe subjective routine and nonroutine experiences and meanings in people’s lives (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010; Biklen, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).
More specifically, phenomenology, which I adopt for this thesis, has gradually become more popular in tourism scholarship. The methodology has been deployed variously by tourism researchers to describe and understand the experience of tourists, local residents, service suppliers, and other stakeholders (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). It is, however, important to state that while phenomenology offers a viable alternative to the so called “master paradigm”, it is by no means an easier one. As Pernecky & Jamal (2010) describe it, phenomenology is highly complex and time-consuming, requiring the researcher’s constant active involvement, attentiveness and knowledge of the relevant philosophical underpinning.

3.3 Heidegger’s Hermeneutic (Interpretive) Phenomenology

Phenomenological scholars typically distinguish two major approaches in phenomenology, namely hermeneutic phenomenology and descriptive phenomenology (Anderson, 1998; Laverty, 2003; LeVasseur, 2003; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). This study uses the former, as propounded by the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. Hermeneutic phenomenology remains an underutilised, and often poorly demarcated method in tourism and hospitality research (Caton & Santos, 2007; Edelheim, 2004; Ingram, 2002; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Szarycz, 2009). Pernecky and Jamal (2010) observe that while phenomenological research is slowly gaining momentum in tourism, many writers in this genre “avoid the discussion of phenomenology...or provide brief accounts of phenomenological approaches...Some simply skirt the peripheries...(2010, p. 1057). Notwithstanding this track record, several authors continue to demonstrate the contribution that phenomenology can make to future tourism inquiry (Edelheim, 2005; Ingram, 2002). However, more research is required for translating phenomenology into an accessible yet rigorous methodology for specific areas of tourism inquiry.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is both a philosophy and method (LeVasseur, 2003; McPhail, 1995; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). It combines hermeneutics, which is concerned with the art and theory of interpretation, with phenomenology, the study of describing phenomena (Van Manen, 1990). In contrast to positivism, hermeneutic
phenomenology rejects objectivity, abstraction, fixed reality and generalisability in favour of subjectivity, interpretive meaning, experience and understanding (Szarycz, 2009). The goal in hermeneutic phenomenology is to understand the nature and meaning of human experience; to discover the heart and depth of a person’s lived experience. The method seeks to discover the essence of events, relationships, thoughts, feelings, values, and beliefs (Casterline, 2009). By bringing to the fore experience as it is articulated by the experiencer, hermeneutic phenomenology can generate new meanings which challenge conventional wisdom, and structural and normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). In Ablett and Dyer’s (2009) terms, hermeneutic phenomenology is an inclusive, critical and dialogical process.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is particularly useful where the intention is to explore subjective lived experiences (Andriotis, 2009; Knibbe & Versteeg, 2008; LeVasseur, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004b; McPhail, 1995; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Szarycz, 2009; Wilde, 2003; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). As such,

Phenomenologists attempt to provide an understanding of the internal meanings or essence of a person’s experience in the lived world by careful description of that experience, striving to understand experience rather than provide causal explanation. ...phenomenology is concerned with ‘what it is like’, or ‘how it seems’, and not with the workings of an ‘external world’. The study of ‘lived experience’ ...is not an assessment of an objective reality but rather, it is a description of reality as it is articulated by the respondent… It is a question of ‘perceptions’ and ‘meanings’, not measurements and causes (Szarycz, 2009, p. 49).

Phenomenology relies heavily on self-report: researchers consult and trust participants to tell them their stories. Researchers in this genre should not, therefore, make any claims about objectivity or about extrapolating from a specific participant’s lived experience to an external reality.

The hermeneutic phenomenological researcher derives data through techniques such as first person accounts of participants in interviews, action research, participant observation, analysis of personal texts (personal diaries, notes, journals, and
technographic/online message boards), and focus group discussions. After data generation the next stage is immersion in the data to discern underlying themes and meanings. Phenomenological methods can be applied to single cases or to judgement samples. In multiple participant research, inferences can be made based on recurrent themes in data, although these can only be tentative (Lester, 1999).

Throughout the hermeneutic phenomenological process, the researcher engages in a process of introspection, self-dialogue, and self-discovery, and acquires a passionate engagement with the phenomenon which encourages disclosure from participants (Casterline, 2009). To facilitate self-reflection, the researcher might record thoughts, feelings, or ideas emerging through intuition, reading, observation, and living the research experience, in a personal journal. These processes help the researcher to clarify the research question(s). Rich, vivid data are gathered through extended interviews, in which the researcher elicits a free flow of ideas, feelings, and images to unfold (Casterline, 2009). These data may be supplemented with personal documents such as journals, poetry, artwork, music, and photographs (Harper, 2002). A key feature of hermeneutic phenomenology is the explicit naming of assumptions and influences as contributors to the research endeavour (Laverty, 2003). Thus hermeneutic phenomenology is an explicitly reflexive methodology. As such I make no pretence about aspiring to seeking an objective truth.

**A Critical Approach**

As already indicated, to the extent that this study critiques existing knowledge related to authenticity for its Westerncentricism, and for the epistemic violence evident in the dearth of an African tourist perspective on authenticity theory, the methodology adopted for this thesis qualifies as a critical hermeneutic approach: I seek to challenge/disrupt the status quo by representing a muted voice. Critical hermeneutics, as explained by Lopez and Willis (2004a, p. 730), is a specialised application of the interpretive tradition in phenomenology, which is founded on the assumption that any act of interpretation is invariably shaped by socially accepted ways of viewing reality. Further, they add, these socially accepted worldviews are a reflection of the values held by privileged individuals within any given social
system; the lived experiences and voices of persons outside of the privileged groups are often ignored. The goal of critical hermeneutics is to make these voices heard. There is, therefore, a clear fit between a key goal of this thesis (to voice underrepresented voices) and the goal of critical hermeneutic inquiry.

As corroborated by Lopez and Willis (2004a, p. 731), a critical hermeneutic inquirer must be prepared to question the “historical bases of dominant ideologies and analyse in detail how these ideologies shape and organize the daily lives of study participants”. As also argued by Stanfield (1998), in relation to qualitative research, the sociocultural and political hegemony of Eurocentric interests and ontology are quite obvious, and when ethnic diversity issues are discussed, they are treated within the confines of orthodox Eurocentric perspectives.

According to Stanfield, there is a curious absence of a body of methodological literature that attempts to de-Europeanize knowledge through more Indigenous approaches. I strongly agree with Stanfield’s call for culturally relevant approaches that push knowledge to accommodate people of African descent and that bring attention to the dependence on European theorists. MacCannell and other “grand theory” contributors in tourism are implicated within this thinking, thus my decision to re-examine authenticity as a modern-man-in-general theory for tourist quests; and to ask whether such Eurocentric cognitive map criteria, as Stanfield puts it, can be applicable in African-as-tourist scenarios. At the same time, I am wary of the “common mistake of Afrocentrists, of approaching Africa as a simplistic geographic place with no cultural and social diversity” (Stanfield, 1998, p. 352).

A critical approach lends my project to overlaps with the field of cultural studies, which is concerned with the political natures of modern society, with its associated history and power struggles (Andrews & Giardina, 2008; Ateljevic, et al., 2005; Can-Seng, 2004; Enevoldsen, 2003). Cultural studies research focuses on ideology, social class, nationality, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, among other socio-structural divides. It is a multifield area which combines various fields, including social theory, history, philosophy, and political economy, to examine cultural phenomena in different contexts (Chakravarty, 2009; Hollinshead, 2006; King,
At the centre of cultural studies is an attempt to understand culture in its diverse forms and political settings.

I emphasise, however, that I subordinate these two “subapproaches” (cultural studies, critical hermeneutics) within a broader and flexible hermeneutic phenomenological design, so that the analysis does not go into a nuanced analysis of the intricacies involved in the two. Their inclusion will instead serve a triangulatory, analytical function.

**Beyond Descriptive Phenomenology: Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Husserl’s (1970) work produced the descriptive phenomenological method as we know it today. However, a student of his, Martin Heidegger, later challenged some of Husserl’s philosophy, producing in the process his own brand of phenomenology: hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology, which I adopt for my enquiry. Husserl argued that as humans live their lives without reflecting critically on their day to day experiences, a scientific method was required to extract from them the essences of lived experiences specific to people in a defined setting. Thus he believed that there are “features to any lived experience that are common to all persons who have the experience” which are known as universal essences, or eidetic structures (Lopez & Willis, 2004a, p. 728; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). For the description of the lived experience to qualify as a science, these structures, which are seen as representing the true nature of the phenomenon, must be identified so that generalisation is possible (Lopez & Willis, 2004a). Husserl assumed that if descriptive phenomenology is conducted as it ought, then the essences generated result in one correct interpretation of the relevant phenomenon. In other words, reality is viewed as objective (independent of context) and ahistorical (independent of history) (Lopez & Willis, 2004a).

Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology goes beyond the descriptive goal of merely outlining core concepts and essences and instead searches for underlying meanings in life experiences, which might not be apparent to the research participants but can be gleaned by the researcher from their accounts (Lopez &
Willis, 2004a). As such, “the focus of a hermeneutic inquiry is on what humans experience” rather than what they “consciously know” (Willis, 2004a, p. 728). Heidegger saw humans as hermeneutic, that is, interpretive beings who are capable of finding meaning in their lives (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Within Husserl’s orientation, the goal of the researcher is to achieve transcendental subjectivity, which requires that the researcher actively sets aside biases and preconceptions, a process known as “bracketing” (LeVasseur, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004a). Similarly, Laverty (2003) explains that while self-reflection is a part of both types of phenomenology, the goal in each case is different. For descriptive phenomenology, the goal is to become aware of one’s biases and assumptions in order to bracket them, or to neutralise them; to set them aside so that they do not bias the analysis. The goal in interpretive phenomenology, on the other hand, is so that the biases and assumptions of the researcher are embedded and essential to the hermeneutic process, and so that the researcher can explicate the ways in which their own experience and background relate to the phenomenon under investigation. Heidegger emphasised that it is not possible to set aside the background of understandings that motivated the researcher to conduct the enquiry in the first instance (Lopez & Willis, 2004a).

Laverty (2003, p. 27) sums up the methodological differences between descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology:

Phenomenological research is descriptive and focuses on the structure of experience, the organizing principles that give form and meaning to the life world. It seeks to elucidate the essences of these structures as they appear in consciousness—to make the invisible visible...Hermeneutic research is interpretive and concentrated on historical meanings of experience and their developmental and cumulative effects on individual and social levels.

It is typical for hermeneutic phenomenologists to keep a reflective journal that will facilitate reflective, reflexive, and interpretive processes. Laverty highlights however that in both phenomenological traditions, data can include the researcher’s own
reflections, participants’ accounts, depictions of the experience from outside the context of the study itself, including the arts, such as poetry and paintings.

A key difference between Husserl’s and Heidegger’s phenomenologies derives from the use or non-use of a theoretical orientation or conceptual framework (Lopez and Willis, 2004a). In a hermeneutic study, while theory is not used as in the positivistic tradition of hypothesis testing, it can be used to focus the inquiry and is used to make decisions about sample, participants, research objectives, and questions. It also assists the researcher in articulating their background and frame of reference. However, the researcher needs to explain how the framework was applied, and to demonstrate that it did not bias the participants’ narratives and meanings.

In contrast to Heidegger, Husserl’s phenomenology fails to recognise the impact of culture, society and politics on an individual’s freedom of choice: humans are seen as “free agents” who carry the responsibility for what happens in their environment and culture, the so-called “radical autonomy” (Lopez & Willis, 2004a). Heidegger, on the other hand, emphasises the idea of an individual’s lifeworld to demonstrate the influence of the world on the person. Thus Heidegger is resolute that phenomenology should be based on observing and analysing Dasein, which translates to being there, or being-in-the-world. The concept of Dasein emphasises that humans cannot exist separately from the world; that they are inextricably connected to the social, cultural and political forces in their worlds, a concept termed “situated freedom”, whose premise is that individuals indeed do have freedom of choice, but this freedom is subject to multiple lifeworld constrains. Clearly, this concept directly opposes Husserl’s radical autonomy (Lopez & Willis, 2004a). As distinct from descriptive phenomenology, therefore, interpretive phenomenology entails exploring the various forces that impact human experiences. According to Lopez and Willis (2004a, p. 729), in hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology, it is the interpretation of the accounts provided by participants in relation to various contexts that is foundational. In summary, for Husserl, context is of peripheral importance, while for Heidegger, context is of central importance (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).
Heidegger also articulated the co-constitutionality of meanings, which sees both researcher and participants as involved in cocreating interpretations of the lived experience. Thus the creation of meaning is an intersubjective process, within interpretive phenomenology. As such there can be multiple interpretations pertaining to the same set of lived experiences. This point is further brought out in that the interpretive process also entails the researcher analysing the implications of meanings for practice, policy, theory, and future research. Table 3.1 summarises the differences between descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology

*Objectivity, Subjectivity and (Non)Bracketing*

Consistent with hermeneutic inquiry, I do not subscribe to bracketing—the Husserlian procedure (Szarycz, 2009, p. 53) “intended to ensure that the ‘essential nature’ of the phenomenon can be objectively described”. In the Heideggerian tradition (that is, in hermeneutic phenomenology), the individual and the experience cannot be separate, they are seen as co-constituting each other. Further within the hermeneutic argument, bracketing is impossible “as one cannot stand outside the pre-understandings and historicality of one’s experience” (Laverty, 2003, p. 27)

While many phenomenological scholars continue to advocate and practice bracketing, I see it as, as Szarycz (2009, p. 55) puts it, “an ill-explained technique,...which can only represent a rudimentary, and entirely misconceived, gesture towards objectivity”. It is my persuasion that the assumptions which really matter are the very ones which we are not aware of. Further, as Szarycz argues, even for those that we can identify, the problem of how to set them aside is not resolved. For a philosophical orientation that espouses the subjective nature of knowing, bracketing is misplaced. It represents to me an illegitimate appropriation of scientific prerogatives, a “subliminal mimicking of science” (Szarycz’s terminology) which orientation I have already disowned. What a phenomenological researcher can acknowledge, however, is their own relevant experience and/or background in relation to the researched phenomenon.
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<td>Transcendental subjectivity (biases and preconceptions must be set aside)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological (focus on knowledge through human consciousness)</td>
<td>Focus on subjective meanings and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do we know what we know?</td>
<td>Ontological (focus on existential relations and experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context is of peripheral importance (radical autonomy- humans are free agents with responsibility over their environment and culture)</td>
<td>What does it mean to be a person (e.g. a teacher, mother, tourist, etc)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartesian duality: mind body split</td>
<td>Context is of central importance (situated freedom- humans’ freedom is not absolute, it is constrained by social, cultural and political forces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mechanistic view of the person</td>
<td>Dasein (being there, being-in the world)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind-body person live in a world of objects</td>
<td>Person as self-interpreting being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahistorical</td>
<td>Historicality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit of analysis is meaning-giving subject</td>
<td>Unit of analysis is relationship between situation and the person, that is, situatedness of the individual in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is shared is the essence of the conscious mind</td>
<td>What is shared in culture, history, practice, language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning is unsullied by the interpreter’s own normative goals or view of the world</td>
<td>Interpreters participate in making data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim that adequate techniques and procedures guarantee validity of interpretation</td>
<td>Establish own criteria for trustworthiness of research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracketing defends the validity or objectivity of the interpretation</td>
<td>Presuppositions and personal experiences are necessary and make the inquiry meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research must shed prior knowledge, avoid detailed literature review prior to data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Researcher can use an orienting theoretical framework to focus the inquiry and explicate study assumptions and frame of reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers should discover a reality that is objective and independent of context – one correct interpretation; close links with traditional scientific paradigm</td>
<td>Co-constitutionality—researcher and participants co-create and co-interpret meaning and understanding, thus more than one interpretation/meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Pernecky & Jamal (2010) and Lopez & Willis (2004a)*
Phenomenological Ontology and Epistemology

A common pitfall among phenomenological researchers is to focus on procedures while overlooking the underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions (Stubblefield & Murray, 2002; Szarycz, 2009). Ontology relates to the form and nature of reality (Fairclough, 2005; Noelker, Ejaz, Menne, & Jones, 2006), and strives to answer questions such as: what is real? what makes it real? is there an absolute reality? or is it mutable? and, conversely, what is unreal? (Blackwood, O'Halloran, & Porter, 2010; Ding & Foo, 2002; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). According to Humberstone (2004), at a taken-for-granted, lived experience level of “individual authenticity”, ontology is a state of Being.

Epistemology on the other hand is concerned with the nature of knowledge and knowing (Adler, 2011; Bråten, 2010; Davies, 2003; Laverty, 2003; Levering, 2010). How do we know what we know? What can we know? Who can be the knower? What truth test must beliefs pass to be legitimised as knowledge? What is the relationship between the knower and the known? In its general form, therefore, epistemology is a study of knowledge via which “rules” about what counts as “truth” can be established (Humberstone, 2004). In relation to tourism and tourists, both on an ontological and epistemological level, we can question (Humberstone, 2004, p. 123);

...from whose perspectives— those of the local community, the tourist or the tourist business—is reality legitimated? That is, for whom are particular ways of seeing and doing privileged?

To respond to the above questions, in relation to this thesis, there is a need to explore what sort of knowledge is produced herein. Being designed around the “eighth moment”, as explained earlier, the thesis focuses on specific, delimited, situated knowledge (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004). Theory emerging from such research is viewed as local theory, that is, context-specific theory. As with any hermeneutic study, knowing and evaluation of reality are interpretive acts. I agree with Phillimore and Goodson (2004) in their echo of the interpretive ontological standpoint that there are no realities/stories out there waiting to be told, only stories
still to be constructed. Acceptance of this means that researchers need to demonstrate greater levels of self-awareness and self-reflexivity. They bring to the research their whole person:

The ‘researcher’s standpoint, values and biases—that is, their cultural background, ethnicity, age, class, gender, sexuality, and so on—play a role in shaping the researcher’s historical trajectory, and the way in which they interpret phenomena and construct texts (2004, p. 17).

Within eighth moment design, research is a multicultural process and there is a recognition that social agents are central to the construction of knowledge. Phenomenologists hold that reality is local and specifically constructed; that there is no external reality that exists independently of the mind (Laverty, 2003). Relatedly, tourism spaces are more than physical locations; they are social constructions. Thus, according to Goodson & Phillimore (2004), meanings relating to these spaces are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed over time. Further, they suggest, and consistent with hermeneutic phenomenology, tourism research needs to see beyond a destination divorced from human subjectivity, towards focusing on the subjectivity and socio-historical and socio-cultural antecedents of such subjectivity.

Another way of putting it is to state that phenomenological researchers can only create a fallible, testable knowledge, that is to say, phenomenological researchers do not aspire to produce generalisable knowledge. Szarycz (2009, p. 54) states this unequivocally “…in probability terms, the extent to which general conclusions can be drawn from studies of this kind is zero”. Part of the reason is that samples are kept small and context-specific (Szarycz, 2009). Knowledge is seen in this paradigm as the best understandings and meanings that have been produced thus far, rather than as a statement of what is ultimately and absolutely real; further, the knower and the known are in a reflexive relationship (Laverty, 2003). Phenomenology therefore rejects the notion of value free research, because the researcher is intricately linked to the generation and interpretation of findings. In other words, the researcher is a passionate participant (Laverty, 2003).
My methodology espouses a “standpoint” epistemology and ontology. Standpoint research contends that gender, ethnicity, culture, sexuality or some other group-or-site-specific element of fact-production are ultimately responsible for both the form and content of knowledge (Humberstone, 2004). More specifically, from the interpretive perspective, reality is seen as residing in the lived experiences of people within their situations and contexts. Humberstone (2004) sees this as critical and suggests that for tourism, standpoint research entails exploring the lived experiences of the host community, its environment and the visitor. She does not mince her words regarding the importance of a standpoint approach:

Tourism studies are nothing if they are not about relations between the visitor, the Other (the host) and the locale—cultures and contexts intermingling...The environmental context as non-human is part of the equation of oppression of marginalised people (Humberstone, 2004, p. 119).

Increasingly, tourism investigators are exhorted to adopt styles of research that are differentially empathetic to the lived experiences and multiple realities that are real to distinct situations and individual or groups, such as a given tourism development body, tourism planning organisations, consumer publics, supplier publics, agent publics, support publics, competitor publics, and special interest groups (Hollinshead, 2004b). Following this exhortation, in this study I try to paint the multiple realities as they occur for various groups and individuals connected to the tourist eatertainment experience in Victoria Falls: tourists (domestic and international, African and nonAfrican), and local traditional performers. Hollinshead (2004b) argues that the worth of qualitative research lies in its capacity to capture contesting worldviews that such publics hold on any phenomenon as it relates to their perceived realities.

3.4 Decolonising Epistemology

Epistemology of Insiderness

Increasingly, tourism social science research advocates emic approaches in which the researcher is a part of the group that experiences the phenomenon of interest, and
in which the researcher’s own experiences and background resonate with those of study participants. The critique of etic researchers, typically Western, projecting their own cultural frames of consciousness over the research Other has been reiterated tourism and other scholarship (Ryan & Gu, 2010). In corroboration with this thinking, this study is emic in more than one sense.

First, I am Indigenous African and Zimbabwean. Second, I am familiar with the resort town of Victoria Falls. I worked there for a year as part of my undergraduate internship requirement. Thus my own experiences in Victoria Falls as a university attaché, local resident, Zimbabwean, tourism scholar, Indigenous African, female, and, in a sense, as a tourist visiting from Australia, become an important part of the research process and analytical consciousness. As argued by Ryan & Gu (2010, p. 167), the researcher’s gaze is filtered “through past knowledge, abilities to empathise with others”, and the researcher’s own interpretations and experiences become part of the data set. In recognition of this fact I engage with my own background and related experiences in appropriate sections throughout this thesis.

**Decolonising Methodology**

My methodology is in many ways a *decolonising* one, in that I engage with discourses of subalternity and Westerncentricism in knowledge creation. Further, unlike traditional research methods, which tended to be done on the relatively disempowered and for the relatively powerful, decolonising methods strive to give primacy to Indigenous epistemologies. They attempt to position Indigenous peoples and their voices as powerful within the research endeavour, as put by Fitzgerald (2005). The decolonising/postcolonial researcher inverts Eurocentric philosophies and paradigms by researching subalterns on their own terms (Liamputtong, 2010), and deploys research so that it is a source of enrichment to the participants’ lives rather than a source of depletion or denigration (Fitzgerald, 2005; Hope, 2006; Smith, 1999). Decolonising research challenges the Westerncentric refusal to recognise non-Western perspectives as “legitimate knowledge”, an attitude which some authors have termed a “methodology of imperialism” (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 22; Smith, 1999). Indigenous methodologies accept Indigenous values, standpoints,
processes, and ways of knowing. They engage interpretive strategies and skills that fit the needs, languages, and traditions of the Indigenous participants (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 23).

Decolonising research also attempts to produce local knowledge regarding how Indigenous participants interpret and understand their own situations (Genat, 2009; Hope, 2006). Genat (2009) offers some useful guidelines for implementing a decolonising (action) research agenda, which is still adaptable for this thesis:

- Establish reciprocity and an equal relationship of trust with the key group of research participants: the critical reference group (in this case, traditional performers, African tourists);
- Acknowledge, respect, value and privilege local knowledge; and
- Bring a self-reflexive component to practice by consistently interrogating your own standpoint and use of power along the dimensions of gender, race, and class;

It is important for the researcher to understand that there are no absolute facts, “there is only interpretation” (Genat, 2009, p. 105). Further, it is the “critical reference group”, denoting the particular stakeholder group whose experiences and knowledge is unknown or perhaps subjugated, which the researcher is primarily interested in, in this case the African subaltern tourist and local performer. It is this subjugated knowledge which the researcher privileges in relation to the allocation of resources for articulating the subaltern position and in the construction of text.

Within a decolonising approach, the researcher uses thick description to evoke *verisimilitude*, so that the reader has an opportunity for vicarious experience; the reader comes to know the story told, as if he or she had it experienced it firsthand (Genat, 2009). The resulting epistemology is one that exists as a truth of the participant regarding a particular phenomenon at a particular moment in time (Decrop, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Genat, 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998), what Scott and Du Plessis (2008) call “ethno-epistemic assemblages”. Such epistemes first and foremost allow for diversity of perspective and experience. Thus “local knowledges” reclaim the legitimacy of
knowledge from the perspective of diverse traditions (Genat, 2009; Scott & Du Plessis, 2008).

Within decolonising research there are restrictions on who can represent “things Indigenous”, with the majority of postcolonial/decolonising thinking suggesting that Indigenous populations must be represented by Indigenous researchers/voices. Thus, for instance, Hope (2006, p. 32) writes about creating Maori epistemology:

The notion of a distinctly Maori ‘epistemology’ that lies at its core provides the justification not only for rights of cultural ownership...but for the exercise of those rights to exclude non-Maori from representing things Maori from representing things Maori.

**Qualitative Purposive Sampling**

In this study, as is the practice in the interpretive paradigm, I employed qualitative purposive/ judgement sampling. This method is defined as the process of selecting units (for example individuals, groups of individuals, organisations) based on specific agenda relating to answering identified research questions (Abrams, 2010; Collingridge & Gantt, 2008; Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007; Short, Ketchen, & Palmer, 2002; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The process is therefore non-random; it is by definition “purposeful”. The selected sample is usually small, about 30 or less (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Qualitative sampling recognises that some informants are better situated to provide relevant insights and understanding into a study than others (Abrams, 2010; Green, 2001; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Koerber & McMichael, 2008; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). While random sampling typically excludes outliers, qualitative researchers are often curious about negative, extreme, deviant, or overlooked cases (Abrams, 2010; Koerber & McMichael, 2008; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In purposive sampling, investigators use their discretion to decide who will provide the best perspective on the phenomenon of interest, and then intentionally invite those perspectives into the study (Abrams, 2010).

What is also significant about purposive sampling is that researchers can allow voices that are otherwise oppressed to be heard (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006). In this
study, this possibility is of paramount importance, because of the intention to voice the African tourist and performer, in particular. More specifically, phenomenological researchers subjectively select participants

...who have lived experience that is the focus of the study, who are willing to talk about their experience, and who are diverse enough from one another to enhance the possibilities of rich and unique stories of the particular experience... (Laverty, 2003, p. 29).

According to Abrams (2010), phenomenological studies tend to involve carefully selected small samples of individuals who share a common experience with the goal of gleaning detailed patterns and relationships of meaning, or themes. However, while purposive samples are well thought out ahead of the study (Abrams, 2010), they often change as the field work progresses. Thus, subject to ongoing reflections and data analysis, sampling goals and strategies are emergent and serial, meaning that choices about sampling are continually adjusted based on information collected in previous observations. The size of the sample is also difficult to predetermine, as researchers find it difficult to predict at what stage they reach saturation (Abrams, 2010; Guest, et al., 2006). At the same time, while saturation is key to rigorous qualitative research, there are no clear operational guidelines as to the criteria for determining the saturation sample size.

With regard to the practicalities of sampling, there is the all-important need to deal with access. Qualitative studies, especially where they involve hard-to-reach populations, particularly require investigators to invest time in building connections with gatekeepers who provide or deny access to a given population of interest (Abrams, 2010). Tourists in commercial venues may be considered a relatively hard-to-reach group, because the concerned service providers want the tourist experience to be free from any intrusions. Thus researchers seeking access to tourists in these venues have to deal with institutional structures and formalities.

For the present study, I had to purposively select potential participants to ensure a balanced sample which included Indigenous African tourists, Western tourists, and local performers at Victoria Falls. Including both African and Western tourists in the
study would allow insightful comparison of the two groups’ behaviours, experiences, and quests, in the context of tourist eatertainment. There were no predetermined numbers of interviews. Instead, I continued to adjust the sampling strategy until the above tourist groups were well represented, and until I was confident that I had reached data saturation. There was no predetermined sample size; rather, the ideal sample size was emergent.

3.5 Gathering the Data

The Challenges of Making Contact

As Frohlick and Harrison (2008, pp. 5-6) note, a key challenge of pursuing in-depth research with tourists is how to access them, or how to “situate ourselves strategically and unobtrusively in a ‘contact zone’ where meaningful and at least somewhat sustained encounters with tourists will transpire”. This presented challenges for me because, in the first instance, most tourists visiting Victoria Falls travel on a pre-determined itinerary, with pre-scheduled activities to be undertaken at specific times, at specific places. They do not schedule an hour of free time, in case there is a researcher who wants to speak to them about their experience at the destination. Therefore, in pursuing tourists for interviews, I often felt like I was trying to squeeze themselves into what was already a full schedule.

Frohlick and Harrison (2008) further observe that tourists in tourism spaces are in a pleasure-seeking mode and are therefore reluctant to give this up to talk to researchers. Tourists are also engaged in a “blissful unawareness of the social and political realities of the lives of local people” (Frohlick & Harrison, 2008, p. 6) and may not wish to be awakened to these realities through the quizzing of a researcher. It is safe to presume that, in the eyes most tourists, I was immediately recognised as a “local”, because of my unmistakably African appearance. As soon as I introduced myself to tourists as a student researcher, I often observed a certain uneasiness on their part, possibly because they feared I would tell them something which would “awaken” them, in the sense suggested by Frohlick and Harrison above.
Further complicating my research access, I found that when tourists holiday at Victoria Falls, in addition to the tour of the Falls, they also consume other activities, including bungee jumping, the popular Flight of Angels (viewing the Falls from a helicopter), safari drives, white water rafting, elephant rides, village tours of surrounding remote, rural areas, gorge swinging, and shopping at the various craft markets for souvenirs. These activities are typically packaged into a one or two-day holiday at the destination, leaving little free time which researchers can take advantage of.

While they lay by the poolside in their swimming costumes, with towels around their waists, reading a book, or gazing at the African sky, I found it particularly difficult to break what seemed to be a dreamy, idyllic space in which their minds would have been floating that moment. It was awkward when they had to adjust their towels modestly, take off their sunglasses, push down the glass of wine or cocktail, and listen to my request for an interview. In time, I learnt to approach them in less obtrusive situations, such as when they were walking on the streets of Victoria Falls, or waiting for a pick-up at a hotel lobby.

My challenge therefore in many situations was to attenuate my presence as far as possible so that I would not disrupt the tourists’ experiences, while still fulfilling my data generation goal to obtain rich, insightful data. This required good interpersonal skills, including paying attention to non-verbal cues about who was willing to be approached, and who appeared to busy. I also had to quickly decide what language would be appropriate when I introduced myself and explained my research intentions. I had to demonstrate respect for their time, without appearing to undermine the importance of my research. This was a difficult balance to achieve. I had to remain graceful when I was turned down, and gather enough courage to try again.

I suspect that my challenges of making contact were not helped by the reputation which the “locals” have acquired for touting at various tourist venues at the destination. Some tourists would surmise, before I had the chance to introduce myself and explain my intentions, that I was trying to sell something to them.
Therefore, as a “local” I was quickly branded into the stereotype of the street vendor who was peddling trinkets. I needed to reassure them as quickly as I could, on all these scores, if they would listen. I had to win them over first.

Making contact in tourist studies is also difficult because tourists are often protected by those with a vested interest in keeping tourists to themselves, or in mediating the tourists’ experiences in order to profit from them (Frohlick & Harrison, 2008). As I experienced on the field, some tourist groups are also under the close observation from tour leaders and tour guides, so that even where the tourist is willing to talk to a researcher, the tour leader may want to limit researcher access, perceiving the latter as an unwelcome intrusion. Tour leaders and guides might be concerned that the researcher could influence their tour group members to question their (tour guides’) “expert” opinion. However some tourists and other research participant groups are keen to talk to a researcher, others might even need to talk to one (Frohlick & Harrison, 2008).

I encountered several tour leaders who would not allow me to speak to members of their tour. In some cases I would be unaware that particular tourists were travelling with a tour guide. Tour guides would feel slighted if they observed me speaking to “their” tourists, without their (tour guides’) permission. One tour guide approached me after one such incident and said, bluntly,

What are you saying to them? You should talk to me before you talk to my tourists. I’m responsible for them. You must ask me first. (South African tour guide)

**Personal Reflection and Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is a phenomenon that emerges out of discussions about the objectivity-subjectivity contention in research (Ateljevic, et al., 2005; Feighery, 2006; Handler & Saxton, 1988; Lancaster, 1996; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005; Walby, 2010; Westwood, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2006). The debate centres on the role of the researcher in influencing the outcome of the research. According to Feighery (2006, p. 271), reflexivity refers to the
capacity of researchers to reflect upon their actions and values during research, whether in producing data or writing accounts.

It insists on “modest claims”, thus proponents of the reflexive turn argue that researchers should make their claims with a degree of reservation; that they must self-critique. In practice, reflexivity manifests in two forms: positional reflexivity, where the analyst examines place, biography, self and other, to understand how they influence the analysis, and textual reflexivity, which entails the researcher analysing the very exercise of textual representation (Feighery, 2006). In qualitative research, the researcher is the research instrument, and thus actively engages with his/her personal background, culture, and frame of reference, in the co-creation and interpretation of data together with the participant (Golafshani, 2003). Feighery (2006, p. 270) asserts, regarding the importance of reflexivity, that all research endeavours are influenced by actions, interactions and interventions in the life-world of the researcher before, and during, the research process, thus reflecting the subjective nature of knowledge. Researchers, like all humans, are members of a social world. However, traditionally, researchers have not readily acknowledged the relationship between the knower and the known.

Feighery observes that with the reflexive turn, there is increasing acknowledgement of the reflexive influence of the epistemic subject on the constructed knowledge. As such, Caton and Santos (2007) suggest that data generation should begin with a process of personal reflection, the goal of which is to bring the researcher’s personal experiences, reflections, and insights to the fore of the project. This suggestion is also consistent with the hermeneutic phenomenological notion of embedding the researcher’s background and preconceptions into the inquiry, and seeing this as a positive and necessary process (Laverty, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004a; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). According to Feighery, reflexivity applies to both the researcher-self as well as personal experiences of the research process, cognitive aspects around the construction processes in research, language of understanding, authorship, theoretical perspectives, and voice.
My attempt to highlight, throughout this thesis, my own subjective perspectives and background, in addition to using the active voice, are all efforts to be reflexive. I emphasise that the knowledge created in this thesis is only a “tale of the field”, rather than a fixed reality which is not subject to contestation. By constantly engaging with varying scholarly standpoints on authenticity, and adding my own interpretation, I seek to provide a pluralist analysis of authenticity, which underlines its multifaceted, convoluted nature, contestable on multiple levels.

3.6 Procedures and Techniques

Netnography

Social science is increasingly turning to the Internet as a (virtual) field work site (Williams, 2007). There is also a concurrent growth in literature on the use of the world-wide-web as a primary research tool (James & Busher, 2006). With these developments, various online methods and adaptations have emerged, termed variously as netnography (online ethnography), virtual ethnography, and webnography. Online environments have become cultural contexts in their own right, and a range of qualitative and quantitative techniques have been re-ingeneered to function in those online social settings (James & Busher, 2006). While these methods are yet to be examined more critically to determine both philosophical and technical implications, it appears certain that the Internet will significantly redefine the way social science research progresses henceforth.

Virtual methodologies can be used to complement traditional fieldwork data. For this study, I adopt netnography to triangulate traditional phenomenological data procedures of focus groups, interviews, and observations. This introduced comprehensive, rich, candid, self-interpretive data uploaded by tourists on online review sites, on and in their own terms, that is, unsolicited by myself, as a researcher. My positionality was that of a “lurker”, which meant that I did not participate in the creation of content on the relevant websites, but instead my role was restricted to observing and analysing interactions between members. Thus I was covert and passive. Other netnographic researchers are active (participating in the
online communicative acts), and overt (they make their research activities known to online community members). I discuss the ethical issues associated with different positionalities in netnography in later sections.

Netnography is a relatively novel research technique originally developed for studying consumer behaviours and culture by Robert Kozinets in the 1990s (Beaven & Laws, 2007; Dwivedi, 2009; Janta & Ladkin, 2009; Kozinets, 2006; Morgan, 2008). To be more accurate, netnography is a multimethod, that is, a combination of various methods and techniques that can include content analysis, historical analysis, semiotics, hermeneutics, narrative analysis, and thematic analysis, among others (O'Reilly, Rahinel, Foster, & Patterson, 2007). In this study, I conducted thematic analysis to glean patterns of meanings from online tourist reviews.

Netnography provides a mechanism for accessing and interpreting computer-mediated textual discourse between anonymous or pseudonymous participants on a public forum (Kozinets, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2002). The methodology is an adaptation of traditional ethnography to the study of online social networks and their culture (Kozinets, 2002). For some online community members, computer-mediated communication (CMC) is more than a communication tool; it is a way of being, which underlines how they are able to define and express self through text. Online behaviour therefore contains symbolic meaning in relation to the way in which people use it, as well as the phenomena which the textual exchanges can reveal. There has been, as a result, an epistemological shift in focus from seeing CMC as merely a method of communication to the start of a new cultural formation (Williams, 2007).

Netnography is also responsive to the increasing importance of online destination image in modern tourism management. Increasingly, the Internet is playing a key role in forming and distribution destination information, making it an important medium of construction for destination image. The image so formed, or online destination image, becomes a major travel decision consideration for prospective travellers. Thus the phenomenon of online destination image is an important one
Kozinets (2002) developed simplified procedures for conducting a netnography. The first step is termed *entrée*, and involves specifying research questions and identifying appropriate online fora for the study, which could be electronic bulletin boards, listservs, multiuser dungeons, chatrooms, independent web pages, blogs, and social network fora such as Facebook and Twitter. Researchers need to choose sites with the most traffic in order to obtain thick, in-depth data. In this study, most traffic was found on Tripadvisor.com, Virtualtourist.com, and Lonelyplanet.com. Next is the data generation phase, which involves copying text directly from the selected online communities. Finally, analysis and interpretation entails coding and contextualisation of communicative acts.

Throughout the process, the researcher needs to be aware of relevant ethical requirements. Kozinets recommends that the researcher should disclose his or her presence and intentions to the members of the relevant online community. However, as noted above, in more recent years, researchers feel that this is no longer necessary when data are extracted from public communication media (Langer & Beckman, 2005), as data are already in the public domain. It is incosequential, and almost absurd, to request permission to access content that is public anyway. Consent and member checks are required in studies involving non-public fora. Also, where the researcher is a passive observer of online communities’ behaviour (passive netnography), as was the case in this study, the requirement for individual, informed consent falls away. The University’s Ethics committee which approved the study also took this approach.

### 3.6.1.1 Sampling in netnography

Sampling in netnography is purposive, as the researcher carefully chooses those online threads which are relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous and data-rich (Janta, Lugosi, Brown, & Ladkin, 2012; Kozinets, 2002). For the present study, the threads chosen were those in which tourists discussed their cultural
experiences and reflected, either directly or indirectly, on the authenticity of toured objects and their total experience.

3.6.1.2 Strengths and Limitations of Netnography

Netnography’s merits are many, but vary with the exact approach adopted by a researcher. Perhaps the method’s strongest merit is the ability of the researcher to “tap into naturally occurring consumer conversations” (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2012, p. 67). The elimination of travel costs to a physical site, text that are already in transcribed format, and the use of computer search engines, all contribute to netnography being cheaper, faster, and simpler than its offline, qualitative research counterparts (Beaven & Laws, 2007; Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2012; O’Reilly, et al., 2007). According to Williams (2007), what is special about virtual field work is the boundless research populations, anonymous informants, and multiple field sites.

Furthermore, communicative texts in online environments are typically candid, owing in part to the pseudonymity or anonymity provided by such communities. Thus users can opt not to provide their details or other personal details, using instead often humorous pseudonyms such as “sexygirl”, “globetrotter”, and “youngatheart”. This gives them a sense of safety and security, which may be linked to greater disclosure on their part. The overall result is that participants demonstrate fewer inhibitions (O’Connor, 2010). The candour of online reviews is notable. For example, reviews on Tripadvisor.com vary from very positive to extreme horror stories, in relation to tourist experiences with specific tourism and hospitality establishments around the world.

However, netnography is, like any other methodology, subject to several limitations, which researchers have to manage to ensure rigour and the achievement of their study goals. First, the passive forms of netnography (where the researcher does not participate in the communicative acts) do not allow the researcher to probe and direct the content or direction of online communications. Also, the researcher has no access to non-verbal cues that might add further insights to the textual data (O’Connor, 2010). With the advent of “emoticons” however, which are growing in
popularity and usage in most online communication platforms, this is partly overcome. For example, the smiley face “😊” can tell the researcher the mood of the tourist who uploaded a particular review, or the emotions accompanying the text.

A further limitation of netnography is that it is virtually impossible to verify the authenticity of participants (for example, whether they are who they claim to be in their online profile, in terms of their age, occupation, area of residence, and gender). Related to this, there is always the possibility that some User-Generated-Content, especially in the case of customer reviews of products and services, is bogus. For instance, it is possible that some businesses, to create negative publicity for their competition, might masquerade as consumers, and upload very negative reviews of their competitors’ products and services. However, some authors have argued that bogus reviews can be discerned to be such by savvy consumers, as they will tend to diverge too widely from the average sentiment. Further, it is suggested, the impact of fake reviews decreases as they become overwhelmed by genuine ones (O’Connor, 2010).

For the present study, I analysed a total of 609 online reviews, downloaded from TripAdvisor.com, Virtualtourist.com, and Lonelyplanet.com. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the numbers of tourist reviews, from which the netnography drew.

Table 3.2: Online tourist reviews by restaurant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>Number of English reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boma-Place of Eating</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mama Africa Eating House</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amulonga restaurant</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Waters Restaurant</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungle Junction Restaurant</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total reviews analysed</strong></td>
<td><strong>609</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Active, Face-to-face Interviews

Face-to-face interviews remain the gold standard of qualitative research (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006), because information about the respondent’s appearance, clothes, mannerisms, as well as other cues, can be recorded. A specialised type of face-to-face interview is the active interview. Active interviews are conversational in nature, and focus on cultivating participants’ narrative activity, while maintaining focus (Caton & Santos, 2007; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). In phenomenological research, participants are requested to describe their experiences in detail. Through in-depth interviewing and probing, depending on skill, the researcher is able to gain rich narratives from participants.

I interviewed, face-to-face, a total of 56 tourists, comprising 33 African tourists, and 23 Western tourists (Table 3.3). I used an interview guide (Appendix A) to ensure that I covered all the research questions. The questions asked were open-ended in nature, and I used follow-up questions to probe. However, I let the participants lead the discussion to a significant degree (Laverty, 2003). I stopped interviewing when I felt I had reached the data saturation, at which point no new insights seemed to emerge from further interviewing.

Interviews varied in duration between 10 minutes and one hour. Where tourists seemed to find the notion of authenticity interesting, or relatable to their experience at the destination, they were forthcoming with personal accounts, even with minimal probing. On the other hand, when tourists were busy, or when they seemed to indicate a lack of interest, their answers were brief, and in some instances, even curt. Thus the interviews varied greatly in terms of the length and scope of narratives generated, and the reticence of participants. The content of narratives also varied with the nature of experiences individual tourists had had at the destination. For example, some tourists had visited more than one restaurant, and therefore had more to reflect on in their narratives. Some tourists were blatant about their lack of interest in the topic of study:

I’m here to see the Victoria Falls. I’m not really interested in anything else.

(German tourist)
Table 3.3: Tourist participants’ countries of origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By country of origin</th>
<th>Number of tourists</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Netnographic participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-African</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Western)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Netnographic reviews: 609</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**African tourist interviews**

| Mozambique          | 1 | - |
| Botswana            | 1 | - |
| South Africa        | 11| - |
| Zimbabwe            | 21| - |
| Unspecified country of origin | - | - |

**Interviews By race/ethnicity**

| African (black)     | 33| Could not be ascertained |
| Caucasian           | 23|                           |

**Interviews by type**

| Face-to-face        | 56| |
| Email               | 11| |

**GRAND TOTAL**

| 67 |
The interviews were conducted at various venues around Victoria Falls, including in restaurants, hotel lobbies, at the entrance to the Victoria Falls Park, on the river cruises, and on the streets. Indeed, I approached tourists wherever I felt, intuitively, that I had a good chance to recruit a participant for an interview. I recorded all interviews using a digital audio-recorder, which I held in proximity to the interviewee, to ensure accurate and clear recording. Interviews with African domestic tourists were conducted in both vernacular (Shona and Ndebele) and English, as code-switching (the use of more than one language in speech), is very common in Zimbabwe, among the Indigenous peoples.

**Focus Groups**

In focus group discussions, a small number of participants are gathered to discuss a particular issue under the direction of a moderator. The researcher strives to create a non-threatening, relaxed environment (Wyatt, Krauskopf, & Davidson, 2008). The discussion is normally audio-recorded and then transcribed and analysed (Wibeck, et al., 2007). The participants are selected and brought together because they are viewed as having a common circumstance or condition that is the focus of the discussion (Colucci, 2007; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Gibson, 2007). They are encouraged to comment and build on each other’s accounts and perspectives, question each other, and exchange anecdotes (Moen, Antonov, Nilsson, & Ring, 2010).

Farnsworth & Boon (2010, p. 605) caution that focus group research is a misleadingly simple methodology, which in reality is a “peculiarly hybrid instrument”. The merit of focus groups lies in the opportunity to generate data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in group contexts (Colucci, 2007; Wibeck, Dahlgren, & Öberg, 2007).

Focus groups have the potential to elicit talk that may be hard to prompt in individual interview situations (Dixon et al., 2010; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010). Focus groups also potentially raise issues the researcher has not thought about (Cooper & Yarbrough, 2010; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010). Further, they provide direct evidence concerning the similarities and differences in the participants’
perceptions and experiences as opposed to post hoc, statement-by-statement analyses and conclusions of the researcher (Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Frazier et al., 2010; Ureda et al., 2011). In addition, they provide the opportunity to observe a substantial amount of human interaction on a topic in a short period of time and using relatively limited face-to-face researcher contact (Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Gibson, 2007; Gillespie, 2010; Murdoch, Poland, & Salter, 2010). Further, the focus group method is particularly effective for connecting with difficult-to-reach individuals, and, safety in numbers makes some individuals more likely to consent to participate. Through focus groups, researchers can gain access to how people engage in collective sense-making, by analysing the dynamics of communication, language and thought (Wibeck, et al., 2007).

Most authors have emphasised that to be complete, analysis of focus group data should extend beyond the topic to include an analysis of the impact of intra-group interactions during the data generation (Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Moen, et al., 2010). To date, however, researchers have tended to focus only on the data as it captures their topic of study, in the process implicitly dismissing the role played by group dynamics in the production of the same data. As suggested by Wibeck et al.,

..., the particular strength of focus groups, [that is] the interaction between participants, has rarely been explored in and of itself. To enable researchers to exploit focus groups to their fullest potential, it is thus necessary to develop methodological tools to enable researchers specifically to study ‘how accounts are articulated, censured, opposed and changed through social interaction and how this relates to peer communication and group norms’ (2007, p. 250).

I conducted audio-recorded, focus group discussions with members of six eatertainment groups who work at Victoria Falls’ tourist restaurants (Table 3.4). Each focus group lasted between 30 and 120 minutes. I used a focus group guide (Appendix B) that I developed to direct the discussion. However, as with interviews, I let participants direct the flow of the discussion. I asked them to pass around the audio-recorder, as they took turns to speak. At the beginning of each response, I
asked each participant to state their name, and how long they had been in the group. Most members of the performance groups were male, aged between 18 and 50. Most of them (80%) stated that they had grown up in the rural areas and townships around Victoria Falls, while the remainder had moved to Victoria Falls from other parts of Zimbabwe in search of work.

Table 3.4: Focus group participants (entertainers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of cultural performance group</th>
<th>Performance venue</th>
<th>Ethnicity(ies) of cultural showcase</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Profile of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amazulu ...</td>
<td>Boma-Place of Eating, Victoria Falls Safari Lodge</td>
<td>Zulu, Ndebele</td>
<td>4 males</td>
<td>3 founding members, 1 junior member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idwala Elikhulu...</td>
<td>Boma-Place of Eating</td>
<td>Shona,</td>
<td>1 male 2 females</td>
<td>Founding leader, 2 senior members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shangani</td>
<td>Jungle Junction Restaurant, Victoria Falls Hotel</td>
<td>Shangani</td>
<td>2 males</td>
<td>1 junior members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Eagles Warriors</td>
<td>White Waters Restaurant, Kingdom Hotel</td>
<td>Zulu, Ndebele, Kalanga</td>
<td>3 males</td>
<td>3 senior members including group leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falls African Spectacular group</td>
<td>Jungle Junction Restaurant, Victoria Falls Hotel</td>
<td>Makishi, Nyawu, Shangani</td>
<td>1 group founder and narrator</td>
<td>Spokesperson and founding leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Amakwezi</td>
<td>Entrance to the Victoria Falls</td>
<td>Ndebele, Shona, Acapella</td>
<td>11 males</td>
<td>11 out of 16 members were present, but senior members dominated the discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted above in relation to the challenges associated with focus groups, I made several observations. First, group leaders tended to dominate the discussions, sometimes acting as spokesperson for the group. Second, as is the local cultural protocol in Zimbabwe, when I approached group leaders for permission to hold a
focus group discussion with them, their enthusiasm to participate was unequivocal. However, when I asked if I could interview members individually and separately, they voiced concerns about group integrity and wanting to “speak in one voice”. However, in one instance, a group leader volunteered to be interviewed on his own. Third, during the discussions, younger members seemed to seek approval from the group leader, before they spoke. This was communicated via meaningful, stolen side glances to the leader, who would nod in approval, as if to say, “You have my permission to speak”.

Several times during the discussion, the subordinates would constantly watch the leader’s facial expressions. It helped that as a “local” with the relevant cultural intelligence, I could understand some of the subtle communicative acts, such as a slight nod of the head, all of which carry insightful, culturally-coded meanings. Often, I had to pose questions at subordinate members directly, to ensure that all participants had a chance to air their views. Fourth, the group leader sometimes signalled to individual members of his group to respond to a question I had posed, as if to demonstrate a democratic style of leadership. For example, one group leader, encouraged a subordinate to speak, but directing him regarding what he was to speak about:

Mike [not his real name], tell her about that competition we won in Harare.

(Performance group leader)

Fifth, senior members of the group could correct a younger member if they thought he had erred in his answer to a question. However, young members kept silent when senior members spoke, interjecting only to demonstrate their concurrence with what was being said by their seniors or leaders. Sixth, younger members gave brief answers, and required more probing by me, to gain insightful narratives, while group leaders and other senior members required minimal probing, often taking the liberty to suggest to me the direction in which they wanted the discussion to go. They were also assertive about the issues they were unwilling to discuss, such as those related to “sacred cultural codes”.
The political dynamics of focus groups were therefore important influences on the scope and content of data, and I attempted to watch non-verbal cues closely. However, the impact of group leaders should not be overstated. It is important to note, for instance, that many of the subordinates were young and ignorant about details which the group leaders would have been more knowledgeable about, such as the history and founding of the group, and contract negotiations with hotel managers. It would therefore have been unreasonable to expect the junior members to answer questions relating to these matters.

**Participant Observation**

Participant observation offers a flexible method of observing human behaviour, experiences, interactions, and reactions (Allan, 2006; Bowen, 2002; Carnevale, Macdonald, Bluebond-Langner, & McKeever, 2008; Chang, 2008; Cocks, 2008; Collings, 2009; Davis & Morais, 2004). As Van Manen (1990) asserts, the best way to understand a person’s lifeworld is to participate in it. However, participant observation has not often been applied in tourism research (Chang, 2008; Seaton, 2002). Methods used in participant observation include informal interviews, direct observation, analysis of personal documents such as diaries, collective discussion, participation in activities, and personal analysis (Allan, 2006; Andriotis, 2009; Clarke, 1996; Cohen, 2000; Drury & Stott, 2001; Everett, 2008; Knibbe & Versteeg, 2008; Markwell, 1998, 2007; Nandhakumar & Jones, 2002; Pezzullo, 2009; Sandler, 1973; Williams, 2007; Winchatz, 2010).

Four versions of participant observation have been identified, namely complete participant (the researcher’s status is completely concealed, the researcher is completely immersed into the activity and relationships), participant-as-observer (the researcher’s status is revealed, the researcher is highly “immersed” in the experience, but there is a level of detachment), observer-as-participant (the researcher’s status is revealed, low participation of the researcher—the researcher remains relatively detached), and complete observer (the researcher assumes a completely detached position, both from the activities of the observed and from the observed themselves). My own activities do not fit neatly into one single version, as
I had to adjust my observation strategies from time to time, in response to different situations, as the study unfolded. I switched from participant to observer, depending on the particular circumstances which I found myself in. However, most of my observation took the complete participant and participant-as-observer formats.

Participant observation conforms to the ethical values of egalitarianism and “status-levelling” in relation to the participant-researcher relationship. Participant observation achieves this in that it is flexible, allows time for the relationship to develop, is less intrusive, and incorporates the relational context (Carnevale, et al., 2008). By adopting this data generation technique, researchers are in a position to observe and record relevant socio-cultural activities in their natural setting. The researcher takes field notes which “infer experiences, observations and insights from the seemingly banal to the profound” (Carnevale, et al., 2008, p. 21). As recommended by Collings (2009), in addition, researchers need to adjust their observation techniques to accommodate the dynamic and sensitive relational aspects in the data production process, in other words, to develop “metacommunicative competence”.

Participant observation however raises several ethical questions. Researchers are usually concerned that when participants know they are under observation, they may change their behaviours. Thus researchers are persuaded in many cases not to reveal their researcher status. In the present study I revealed my researcher status to gatekeepers (restaurant managers, hotel managers, employees, tour guides). However, given the low risk, and relatively non-sensitive, and non-personal (in the “personal information” sense) nature of under my study, it was unnecessary to intrude on tourists’ enjoyment with formalities about a research project, unless otherwise I needed to ask them very specific questions in more detail. During my observation efforts, a significant proportion of my interactions with tourists were limited to casual, non-intrusive “chit-chat”.

I spent approximately 110 hours in the selected hotel restaurants and other hospitality spaces where tourists are entertained, over a period of six months, between October 2011 and April 2012, observing aurally and visually the behaviour
of different groups of people. I spent most of this time at the Boma Restaurant, which I chose to be the primary observation site, owing to its popularity at the destination, as well as its highly choreographed “cultural experience”, as its online marketing message states. The observation process was unstructured, consisting of watching, listening, and taking notes, and most importantly, actively participating in tourist activities, in order to get first-hand experience of the phenomena. Thus for example, as part of my participant observation in the restaurants, I

- got my hair braided;
- chatted with the fortune teller;
- had my face painted;
- danced with local dance performers;
- participated in drum beating sessions;
- tasted local cuisines; and,
- engaged other diners in conversation.

I stayed at Victoria Falls for the entire six month period of data generation. It was important to immerse myself into the broader cultural environment of the whole town, and therefore observation was not limited to restaurants. As such my observation also included incidental, unstructured observation in other tourist spaces, such as on river cruises, village tours, and on the streets of Victoria Falls, where I took every opportunity to engage in spontaneous chit-chat (Cole, 2007). I took field notes both contemporaneously and retrospectively, although as far as possible I aimed for the former, to ensure that notes remained vivid, emergent and immediate. In the next chapter, I return to a more detailed analysis of the eatertainment spaces, that is, the restaurants.
3.7 Thematic Data Analysis

The challenge with most phenomenological studies, and true for the present study, is that a huge amount of data can be generated: interview notes, tape recordings, and jottings, all of which will require in-depth analysis (Lester, 1999). I transcribed all audio-recorded data (interviews and focus group discussions) verbatim. While various conventions exist for transforming spoken texts into written form, Braun & Clarke suggest that at a minimum it requires a rigorous and thorough orthographic transcript'” including any useful nonverbal cues such as smiles, and winks (2006, p. 88).

To facilitate more organised data management and storage, I utilised NVivo 9.0 software to create a database of all data collected from the fieldwork, including audio recordings, observation notes, reflective journal notes, interview transcripts, informal conversation notes, and pictures. Therefore NVivo facilitated iterative movement between scripts. The actual analytic process was manual, with only minimal use of NVivo for initial broad categorisation of data.

Hermeneutic Interpretation

Analysis of data in hermeneutic phenomenology involves the co-construction of meaning by the researcher and each participant, thus producing multiple knowledge and realities. As argued by Laverty (2003), there cannot be a finite set of procedures that define the interpretive process, because interpretation arises from pre-understandings and a dialectical movement between parts of, and the whole of the texts of those involved in the study. The overall approach in the analyses focuses primarily on highlighting an African tourist and perspective on the notion of authenticity quests, and comparing this with that gleaned from Western tourist narratives in online reviews.

A key aspect of the analysis is the use of hermeneutic imagination which can be understood as critically examining
what is at work in particular ways of speaking or acting to help facilitate an ever-deepening appreciation of the world or lived experience. This requires an attentiveness to ways in which language is used, an awareness of life as an interpretive experience, and an interest in human meaning and how we make sense of our lives. To see something in a new imaginative way is to see it other than it has been seen before and to integrate it into a new semantic context (Laverty, 2003, p. 30).

The interpretation process was a fusion of the text, the context, participants, the researcher (myself), and where available, individual contexts and backgrounds, or lifeworlds. Laverty (2003) adds, consistent with what I already highlighted, that hermeneutic analysis requires self-reflexivity, and an ongoing conversation about the lived experience while at the same time actively constructing interpretations of the experience and questioning how those interpretations were reached. Also similar to what I have done, Laverty recommends that a researcher makes use of a reflective journal as part of the “hermeneutic circle” (background, co-constitution, pre-understanding) process of moving back and forth between parts and the whole of the data and write up.

**Thematic Analysis**

At the core of the qualitative data analysis process is the identification of key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Jia, 2011; Laverty, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004a; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Szarycz, 2009). A theme captures something significant about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Conaway & Wardrope, 2010; Guest, et al., 2006; Guest & McLellan, 2003; Gupta & Levenburg, 2010). The thematic analysis process consists of seven stages, derived in combination from analytical processes laid out by several authors on thematic analysis in phenomenological research (Anderson, 1998; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010; Singh, Hu, & Roehl, 2007; Sullivan, 2003; Todres & Wheeler, 2001; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007), as follows:
3.7.1.1 Stage one: Assembling the data

The thematic analysis process began by transcribing and entering all data into NVivo 9.0, a qualitative data management and analysis software. The data included audio recordings of interviews and focus group discussions, field notes, reflective notes, interview and focus group transcripts, as well as photographs. This was followed by double-checking that all data items had been uploaded.

3.7.1.2 Stage Two: Getting an Intuitive Feel of the Data

The next stage involved reading the textual data several times through to gain an intuitive, overall feel of its content, depth, and direction in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gupta & Levenburg, 2010; Loewenthal, Lee, Macleod, Cook, & Goldblatt, 2003). As Braun & Clarke advise, it is vital for researchers conducting thematic analyses to immerse themselves in the data to the extent that they are thoroughly familiar with the depth and breadth of the content (2006, p. 87). For an interpretive thematic analysis, computerised software, on its own, cannot suffice. Immersion entails repeated reading in an active way, and searching for semantic and latent meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Groenewald, 2004). During this stage I also took notes and marked ideas for coding.

3.7.1.3 Stage Three: Generating Initial Codes (Open Coding)

I coded by highlighting segments of the data set that responded either directly or indirectly to the research questions of the study, and grouping these segments according to common or closely related meanings.

3.7.1.4 Stage Four: Collating Codes into Potential Themes (Axial Coding)

Having identified initial codes, I collated them into preliminary themes. This process involved considering how different codes combined to form an overarching theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once this was complete, I began thinking about the relationships between themes and identifying umbrella themes and subthemes within them.
3.7.1.5 Stage Five: Reviewing Themes (Selective Coding)

The fifth stage entailed reviewing candidate themes and considering which ones were not quite themes. Some themes collapsed into each other, while others needed to be broken down into narrower themes. Data within themes should cohere meaningfully, and there should be clear distinctions between individual themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Conaway & Wardrope, 2010; Floersch, et al., 2010; Gupta & Levenburg, 2010). Coding and recoding and collating were repeated until refinement did not add anything substantial. At this stage I had a good idea of what the different emergent themes were and how they fit together to tell the story.

3.7.1.6 Stage Six: Refining and Relating Themes

In addition to understanding the story that each theme seemed to tell, I considered how individual themes fit into the broader overall story (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Groenewald, 2004). Braun & Clarke recommend that although by this phase of the analysis the researcher will already have working titles for each themes, it is advisable to refine the names further so that they are concise, punchy, and capable of giving prospective readers a sense of what the theme is about.

3.7.1.7 Stage Seven: Telling the Story

The final stage of thematic analysis was the final write-up, an ongoing process, aimed at telling the whole story. I also provided, in the write up, sufficient examples/extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of each theme. The extracts selected were vivid illustrations of the points made, and were embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly tells the whole story. It was critical that the narrative went beyond description of the data, and made an argument in relation to my research questions, as suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006).

3.8 Validity and Reliability

To be credible and worthwhile, all research should be rigorous. The issues of validity and reliability in research are well documented. However, qualitative
research entails different criteria for establishing validity and reliability compared to quantitative or positivist research. Indeed, in discussing how rigour is ensured, many qualitative researchers do not use these terms (reliability, validity) at all, substituting them with credibility, trustworthiness, neutrality, confirmability, consistency/dependability, and applicability/transferability.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation can be defined as a method of enhancing the richness and rigour of a study by approaching it from multiple standpoints (Cohen & Manion, 1986). The research output is both more detailed and more balanced (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1996). Since each method has merits and demerits, and different methods or measures do not share the same weaknesses and sources of bias, combining methods creates the possibility of exploiting merits and neutralising weaknesses of each method employed. In other words, the rationale for triangulation is the expectation that the weaknesses in each single method or technique will be compensated for by the counter-balancing strength of another (Jick, 1983).

Four types of triangulation have been identified in the literature, namely data triangulation (different groups of persons in different places, at different times), methodological triangulation (different data gathering methods), investigator triangulation (multiple researchers), and theory triangulation (using more than one theoretical framework in data interpretation and analysis) (Denzin, 1978; Oppermann & McKercher, 2000). The use of triangulation in tourism and hospitality research is an increasing trend (Oak, 2007; Oppermann & McKercher, 2000; Schanzel, 2010; Seaton, 1997).

In this study, I triangulate traditional phenomenological data generation tools (interviews, participant observation, focus groups) with netnographic techniques. This constitutes methodological triangulation. Secondly, data were collected from different groups of persons in different places, and at different places: tourists (domestic and international, African and non-African), and traditional performers, in more than one venue. Thus I also employ data triangulation. Thirdly, I embed critical and cultural studies approaches as analytical orientations within a broad
phenomenological design. This diversifies the theoretical and conceptual frameworks so that the analysis is performed from various theoretical suborientations. Further, I analyse authenticity from the perspectives of various schools of thought (objectivist, constructivist, existential, postmodern), creating a comprehensive, pluralist, multivocal discussion. This allows the contestation of authenticity to emerge—a key point made in this thesis.

**Thick Description**

To further enhance the study’s rigour, I provide “thick descriptions” within the analysis and discussion of study findings. This entails providing quotes that support each point made, and acknowledging reflexivity. Further, as noted by several authors, a thick description of human behaviour is one that entails not only relaying an observation, but explaining it within its context, so that it bears more meaning to an outsider (Cromdal, Osvaldsson, & Persson-Thunqvist, 2008; Luhrmann, 2001; Wears & Karsh, 2008). Additionally, according to Holloway (1997), a thick description provides a detailed account which delineates the social and cultural patterns in the study context and demonstrates their connection to the researched phenomenon.

Consistent with the above suggestions, I attempted to examine, where possible, the link between the lifeworlds of participants, and their narratives. I also highlight the socio-cultural dynamics, in respect of participant backgrounds, and explain how they inform the analytic process. Furthermore, the decision to conduct manual analysis, as opposed to computerised analysis, ensured that I could analyse data segments within their context, thus maintaining the integrity of participants’ lived experiences. Table 3.5 outlines the criteria used for each phase or component of the present study process and design in relation to rigour.
Table 3.5: Summary criteria for rigour in qualitative research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Actions taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope and purpose</td>
<td>Clear outline of research rationale and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Study interwoven with existing knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Study positioned in research gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Triangulation of hermeneutic phenomenology with netnography, to maximise richness of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple data collection methods and forms: online reviews, face-to-face interviews, email interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, informal chit-chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>Quotes given as evidence of claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thick description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive use of field notes, reflective journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear exposition of how interpretation led to conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical dimensions</td>
<td>The reflexivity of my role as researcher explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstration of the co-creation of meaning and interpretation with between myself and participants, consistent with hermeneutical phenomenology design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledgement of my self-awareness/ insight;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation of my work background at Victoria Falls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of the emic nature of the research- my relationship to the cultural context under study: my Zimbabweaness, my Africanness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation of the effects of the research on me: contemplating how I am portrayed as an “Other”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The emergent, constantly evolving nature of fieldwork techniques e.g. adjusting numbers of participants or sample size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance and limitations of the study</td>
<td>Formal ethics approval committee obtained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My commitment to integrity, honesty, transparency, equality, and mutual respect in relationships with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair dealing with all research participants</td>
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<td>Recording of dilemmas met and how they were resolved in relation to ethical issues</td>
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<td>Documentation of how autonomy, consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were managed: consent form and information sheet made available to potential participants, data has been de-identified</td>
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<td>Analysis interwoven with existing theory and other relevant explanatory literature drawn from similar settings and studies</td>
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<td>Discussion of how explanatory propositions/ emergent theory may fit other contexts</td>
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<td>Limitations/ weaknesses of study clearly outlined: limitations inherent in context-specific formats</td>
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<td>Provides new insights and increases understanding</td>
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<td>Significance for current policy and practice outlined</td>
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<td>Assessment of value/empowerment for participants</td>
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<td>Outlines further directions for investigation</td>
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<td>Demonstrates that aims/ purposes of research were achieved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Walsh & Downe, 2002
3.9 Ethical Considerations

As already mentioned, formal ethics approval (Approval number ECN-11-163) of the project was sought and obtained from the Southern Cross University’s Ethics Committee, early on in my candidature, to ensure that the research satisfies the guidelines and minimum requirements in relation to social science ethics, including informed consent, beneficence, merit, and respect. I maintained a keen sensitivity to, and respect for, the status of the research participants throughout the study. Key within this, as recommended by Walsh & Downe (2006), was viewing the study not as on participants, but as with participants. In years past, it has been observed that researchers have implicitly assumed a hierarchical relationship between themselves and “subject”.

Access

A formal letter requesting research access was sent to the owner and/or manager of the respective establishments where data were collected. I also presented myself personally to the owners and/or management on arrival at the site of data generation to explain, face-to-face, the intention of the study and to reassure them of the purely academic motivation for the research. Negotiating access was aided by my previous background and professional contacts at Victoria Falls, which I alluded to earlier.

Informed Consent/Voluntary Participation (Interviews)

Wherever possible, I explained the intent of the study to prospective participants so that they made an informed decision in relation to participating in the study. I gave each participant the opportunity to ask questions and clarify matters with myself to ensure that they had a clear understanding of the research’s objectives and their potential contribution. I made it clear that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any point before and during the data collection process.

Informed consent not only protects the participants, but also furthers the goals of the researcher. As Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 122) assert:
If evaluators [researchers] cannot be clear, direct, and undeceptive regarding their wish to know how stakeholders [study participants] make sense of their contexts, then stakeholders will be unclear, indirect, and probably misleading regarding how they do engage in sense-making and what their basic values are. Thus deception is not only counter to the posture of a constructivist evaluator, in that it destroys dignity, respect, and agency, but it also is counterproductive to the major goals of a fourth generation evaluation. Deception is worse than useless to a nonconventional evaluator; it is destructive to the effort’s ultimate intent.

Confidentiality and Non-Attribution

The protection of participants’ privacy and identity is of utmost importance in this study. The majority sentiment among academics is that “respondents should not be identifiable in print” and that they should not suffer any harm or embarrassment as a result of the research (Punch, 1998, p. 175). Therefore, participants were not asked for their names or other personal identification information. Further, the data they provided are not attributed in any manner which might threaten their anonymity or pseudonymity. By-name references have been removed where possible.

3.10 Limitations of the Methodology

The limitations which operate in this study derive from the small sample and the limited scope of exploratory, qualitative study. Thus, as with most studies of this nature, there is a lack of generalisability/external validity in the conventional sense. At the same time, the smallness of the sample and the limited scope are what allows the study to be indepth and more critical. Indeed, as already discussed, generalisability is not a goal in qualitative studies. Further, context specific research can generate insights that can be transposed beyond the original sites of the study (the notion of transferability), so that findings can “ring true” in other settings (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001).

Thus while acknowledging the above limitations, it is unfair to apply the positivist tests of sample size, objectivity, numerical goals and generalisability to case-specific
phenomenological studies, because they will fail, as Hodkinson & Hodkinson argue, almost by definition. Context specificity in phenomenology is what creates the opportunity to understand complex inter-relationships, lived reality, the unexpected, the unusual, and the idiosyncratic, and, in the process, provide a firm basis for positioning theory in the lived world (Alonso, O'Neill, & Kim, 2010; Callahan, 1998; Dyer, Aberdeen, & Schuler, 2002; Gotham, 2007; Jimura, 2011).

There are notable challenges and limitations which also arise in relation to virtual (that is, online) research methods. For example, Williams (2007) poses some relevant questions: first, to what degree is the researcher able to capture in a convincing way the lived realities of participants when anonymity inherent in online interactions casts doubt upon the identities of research participants? Secondly, how does the observer manage their identity in settings mediated by text and images, and how does this impact on data collection? Further, how are researchers to define the boundaries of online fields and the experiences of those under study? In response to these questions, I have acknowledged the virtual impossibility of ascertaining the authenticity of participants, while also stressing that the merits of netnography far outweigh its weaknesses. Further, in the present study, because netnography is triangulated by other data forms, rather than operating as a stand-alone method, the weaknesses of each individual method are to some degree at least, compensated for by the strengths of the other.
4. THE STUDY CONTEXT: EATERTAINMENT SPACE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on the participant observation that I undertook at the restaurants, and outlines the context of the study, painting a picture of eatertainment spaces and rituals that constitute the touristic experience at Victoria Falls. I begin with a brief background on Victoria Falls, the destination, which forms the broader context in which eatertainment occurs. I then summarise the characteristics of the tourist market at the eatertainment venues. The next section is a description of the individual restaurants, devoting most page space to the Boma Restaurant, which served as the primary observation site in the study. I also identify the different cultural objects that constitute the cultural landscape of the restaurants, and about which tourists’ authenticity perceptions, discussed in the next chapter, pertain. Further, with the aid of photographs, I present a vivid depiction of tourist rituals in eatertainment spaces.

4.2 Victoria Falls: The Destination

Before the 2000s, Zimbabwe’s tourism industry was among the country’s top four foreign currency earners, along with tobacco, gold, and ferrochrome ores (Turton & Mutambirwa, 1996). Mabugu (2002) notes that in the 1990s, while the overall Zimbabwean economy was in decline, tourism was on the rise. However, as stated before, following the Fast Track Land Redistribution Programme of the early 2000s (Andreasson, 2010; Mabugu, 2002; Stoneman, 2000), tourism arrivals dropped to 40% of their 1999 levels (Mabugu, 2002). The country lost some of its competitive edge, having previously been rated among the top destinations in Southern Africa, and on the continent.
To salvage what was left of the country’s tourism industry in the aftermath of the Land Redistribution Programme, the Zimbabwean government launched the controversial Look East Policy in the mid-2000s, targeting the Asian market, to compensate for the drastic drop in arrivals from the West (Youde, 2007). This has seen the number of Asian tourists visiting the country increase dramatically. Further, the relatively calm political climate in the country after the formation of the coalition government in the late 2000s has helped to improve the country’s destination image, and therefore, its appeal to tourists. Safety concerns are nonetheless still prevalent among some prospective tourists. For example, one prospective tourist wrote on TripAdvisor.com:

My daughters and I will be traveling to Victoria Falls and Hwange National Park in July 2011. Is it safe to travel in Zimbabwe? Any recommendations? We will also be traveling to Botswana … Department of Foreign Affairs has issued the following statement - "We advise you to reconsider your need to travel to Zimbabwe at this time due to politically motivated violence in some areas, the high level of criminal activity, the absence of rule of law, and the poor economic conditions which could lead to civil unrest". Just want to get the facts for safe travel (American tourist, TripAdvisor).

The net result has been that overall arrivals are still low, and far from 1999 levels. Tourism statistical data are, however, difficult to access, as the country’s tourism management body, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, still lacks an efficient, computerised tourism information system.

Due to low demand, tourist establishments have struggled to remain profitable under tough economic conditions. They have had to work harder to attract the relatively low numbers of tourists who are visiting the destination. Cultural entertainment seems to be one of the sources of competitive advantage at the destination, given that the most culturally packaged restaurants such as the Boma attract the larger share of the tourist market. Competition and rivalry between restaurants is aggressive. There are more than 30 restaurants of different types, spread over a relatively small geographical area, including fast food restaurants, full-service buffet
and à la carte restaurants, and cafés. It is in this context that the eatertainment experiences examined in this thesis occur.

Victoria Falls (Appendix C) however remains Zimbabwe’s prime tourist destination. Even with the political and economic crises that have dogged the country, the Victoria Falls, one of the seven Natural Wonders of the World, retains its appeal, and tourists from all over the world still flock to view this spectacular natural phenomenon. The destination is popular for various tourist activities, in addition to touring the Falls, most of which are nature-based, including bungee jumping, white water rafting, elephant riding, gorge swinging, and game/safari drives. Thus tourists do not necessarily visit Victoria Falls to experience eatertainment. Rather, eatertainment can best be described as a supporting experience. This is not to say that it does not constitute, in its own right, a peak, or memorable experience. Indeed, the contrary is correct, as I will explain in the forthcoming chapters.

4.3 The Cultural Restaurant Market

From my observations over the course of six months, I noted several characteristics of the tourist market at the eatertainment venues around Victoria Falls. The greater majority of tourists at these restaurants are Westerners. Most Western tourists came from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, South Africa (that is, non-indigenous, Caucasian South Africans), France, and Italy. These Western tourists also typically travel as part of a large group, and in fewer cases, as couples or families. There were very few solo travellers. As already indicated, there is also a growing Asian market, from China, Korea, and Japan. Asian tourists almost exclusively travelled as part of very large group package tours, with the help of a tour guide. As I stated earlier, this market has grown due to more aggressive, inbound tourism marketing in the region, following the Zimbabwean government’s Look East Policy launched in the mid-2000s (Youde, 2007).

I noted further that most cultural restaurants are patronised by an older market. The few younger people who visited the restaurants mostly did so in the company of their parents or other older family members. Younger tourists seemed to prefer fast
food restaurants in the town centre, or at barbeque outlets at backpacker lodges and bars. There were however, occasionally, groups of “overlander” tourists, who are mostly youths in their twenties. They are known to travel on low budgets for extended periods and distances, camping from one country or destination to another. At the Boma, one local performer characterised them as follows:

Overlanders are young, hungry people. They come to eat, eat and eat some more. They don’t care much about the entertainment. They have big appetites, and they tip very little, or nothing. And they get drunk. (Singer, Boma Restaurant)

Domestic, indigenous tourists constitute a very small percentage of the demand for eatertainment, which I would estimate at less than 5% of the total demand, from my observations during my visits. Indeed, on most nights at the various eatertainment venues, there would be no indigenous Zimbabwean guests at all. This could be explained in terms of the low income levels among Zimbabweans in general, which results in low tourism participation. During the peak Christmas season, there were, however, increased numbers of indigenous African tourists from neighbouring countries—South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia. My observations about the skewed nature of tourist demand, in favour of international visitors, was echoed by one performer:

Very few black people eat here. It’s too expensive for the average black person. On most nights there are only white people here. (Dancer, Boma Restaurant)

4.4 The Restaurants

I conducted participant observation at five cultural eatertainment venues, namely, Boma-Place of Eating (at the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge), Mama Africa Eating House, White Waters Restaurant (at the Kingdom Hotel), Amulonga Restaurant (at the A’Zambezi River Lodge), and the Jungle Junction Restaurant (at the Victoria Falls Hotel). The Boma, being the busiest and most culturally coded of all five venues, was the primary observation site. I conducted 70% of the observation work
there. Therefore, most of the detail in this section pertains to the Boma. Further, the eatertainment shows at the five restaurants were similar in many ways. For example, Makishi, Zulu, and Shangani dances were performed at more than one venue. Thus it is unnecessary to repeat overlapping descriptions, unless there are important or interesting points of difference.

The five restaurants were appropriate for the purposes of the study goals as they are among the most popular and highest ranked restaurants at Victoria Falls. As such, they offered a convenient location for meeting, observing and interviewing tourists from all over the world. Further, these establishments are the subject of a large quantity of online reviews posted by tourists on Victoria Falls restaurants, particularly on Tripadvisor.com. More importantly, they are marketed, as their webpage descriptions will show, as cultural experiences that extend far beyond the food product. Thus it is expected that most tourists visiting these places anticipate in advance to be immersed in an African/Zimbabwean cultural experience. Tourists are therefore engaged in an introspective process, relevant to the study, before, during, and after the experience, which very likely includes reflecting on the cultural presentations, and not unlikely, on authenticity. As such, it became relatively easy to interest them with the topic of the study, and subsequently to recruit them as participants.

All five restaurants featured local performances on most nights. The Boma, White Waters, and Jungle Junction staged local cultural shows daily for their guests. The eatertainment experience in all five restaurants was highly scripted and choreographed, which meant that from day to day, the performances were virtually unchanging. The songs and dances performed, narrations, and group composition, were all nearly constant. There were significant commonalities among the restaurants as well. Many of the songs and dances, as well as the style of presentations, were similar from one restaurant to the next. After several sessions of observation from one restaurant to the next, taking notes became monotonous, as my notes gradually became very repetitive, as the descriptions that follow will show. The resemblance in eatertainment content among restaurants at Victoria Falls is perhaps a reflection of the tourist eatertainment industry’s beliefs about what tourists
I observed, for instance, that songs which are believed to resonate strongly with popular images of Africa, were almost guaranteed to be included in the show at most restaurants. What varied slightly from day to day was tourist response, but even that could be predictable on some levels. As two performers pointed out:

Every night is the same. It’s a bit monotonous, if I’m to be honest. We stick to the script. We know which dance comes first, including all the steps. The essence is constant, every day. (Singer and drummer, Jungle Junction Restaurant)

We follow a strict schedule when we perform. It gets monotonous after a while, but that just comes with the territory. You perform the same dances every day, the same songs, the same everything. Tourists …often complain that our shows are repetitive. (Dancer, White Waters Restaurant)

Table 4.1 summarises the various cultural objects found at each eatertainment venue.

**Table 4.1: Cultural objects in eatertainment space**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eatertainment venue</th>
<th>Prominent “cultural objects”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boma-Place of Eating</td>
<td>Traditional dance, traditional music, fortune telling, face painting, story-telling, carving demonstrations, interactive/participative drumming, participative “dancefloor” show, local foods on the menu, African dress code (chitenge cloth), Mopani worm tasting, handwashing ceremony, local opaque beer (“chibuku”) tasting, variety of game meats (kudu, impala, crocodile, buffalo, warthog)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mama Africa Eating House</td>
<td>African interior decor, township/Afro-jazz music and dance (fused with Western pop), Shona and Ndebele dishes, township architecture, variety of local game meats.</td>
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</table>
The Boma-Place of Eating

Boma restaurant is located on the grounds of the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge Resort, which includes a hotel and time-share lodges. As already indicated, the restaurant is the busiest at the destination, catering to over 200 tourists each night during the peak season (October to January), and sometimes, every during the low demand season. The restaurant is overtly coded as a cultural experience, as its company webpage marketing message depicts:

The Boma-Place of Eating provides a unique cultural experience that bombards the senses with the tastes, sights, sounds & smells of Africa- together with the warm hospitality of Zimbabwe and its people. It is open for dinner 365 days of the year. 

Adjacent to the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. The Boma nestles in a Gusu Forest and is partly open to the spectacular African night skies. Guests staying at the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge enjoy a courtesy shuttle to/from the Boma whilst those from other hotels may be transported for a nominal charge. The Boma specializes in a superb selection of traditional Zimbabwean dishes. We offer four courses combining an array of starters with a barbeque buffet. Adventurous palettes are enticed with local delicacies such as warthog steaks and game stews. Dare to sample such ethnic treats as deep fried Kapenta and Mopani worms. The Boma is open for dinner from 19h00. We highly recommend that you are seated by 19h15 for an evening filled with entertainment. Guests are welcomed with a traditional greeting in the local languages, Shona and Ndebele. The guests are then dressed in ‘chitenges’ (traditional robes) and prepared to enter the main enclosure. They are invited to take part in a hand washing ceremony before sampling traditional beer and snacks, as a prelude to dinner. A feast of nightly entertainment incorporates Amakwezi traditional dancers, a local story teller and a witchdoctor. After dinner, guests are invited to join in the drumming extravaganza from 21h00. This is the highlight of the evening and all are invited to participate in the drumming and dancing show with our renowned drummers – Amazulu.

Source: www.thebomarestaurant.com
The description of the restaurant in the above website extract clearly paints a picture of a highly entertaining cultural experience, with access for tourists to various cultural objects. The use of vernacular terms in reference to local cultural objects is also significant, as it connotes subtle notions of the local, ethnic, traditional, and original. The company webpage also includes enticing images of traditional dancers, African drums, multinational and multiracial groups of tourists dancing, laughing, eating, and in general, appearing to be enjoying themselves. There are also many images of local performers (for example Figure 4.1), showcasing different aspects of the local culture.

![Performing the “warrior dance” at the Boma Restaurant](www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html)

**Figure 4.1: Performing the “warrior dance” at the Boma Restaurant**

*Source: www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html*
The restaurant’s architecture (Figure 4.2), with its open-sky, thatched design, creates a fun, relaxed, and casual ambience, in keeping with the thatched, Shona and Ndebele building styles. At the entrance, guests are welcomed by two local drummers, dressed in African-style, safari shirts (Figure 4.3). The restaurant interiors are carefully crafted to evoke an African ambience. The walls are decorated extravagantly with sculptures, paintings and other local-style artworks. The table linen is very brightly coloured “java” material.

However, I observed that part of the restaurant interior includes laptops (where tourist photographs are processed on request), and cashier machines plugged into the wall. These pieces of technology seem to stand in conflict with the concept of “Africanness”, which the restaurant appears to try to invoke. It is clear from this example contradicting the desire to create an “authentic” cultural experience, the practicalities of running a business might imply the need to introduce objects into the eatertainment space which are not necessarily consistent with the desired Otherness image.

Figure 4.2: Boma-Place of Eating

Source: www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html
At the entrance, an African print cloth, locally known as a *chitenge* (Figure 4.4), is draped around each guest, and secured with a knot at the shoulder. The tourist’s own outfit is lost under this apparel. Virtually all tourists accept this dress, possibly wary of causing offence if they declined. It was interesting to note, however, that it was only at the Boma restaurant, throughout all of Victoria Falls, that I saw people in *chitenges*. I never encountered any locals dressed in *chitenges*. I asked one of the performers at the Boma regarding the origin of the *chitenge*, and he explained that the dress was in fact a cultural practice from Zambia, and not Zimbabwe. However, as Victoria Falls is the border town between Zambia and Zimbabwe, he reckoned, it was acceptable for some cultural practices from Zambia to be showcased at Victoria Falls:

Well, Victoria Falls and Zambia have a lot of shared cultural practices. We take a lot from each other’s cultures. Besides, there is a lot of migration from Zambia to Victoria Falls, and so the Zambians bring their culture with them,
and influence our own culture here. In time, we begin to identify with some cultural practices from Zambia. *(Drummer, Boma Restaurant)*

![Figure 4.4: The *chitenge* ceremony- the “dress code”](source: www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html)

At the table, the guests are seated and treated to the local brew, *chibuku*, which the waiters describe as a “welcome drink”, poured from a traditional gourd, with “cheers!” to complete the ritual. Guests’ hands are then washed (Figure 4.5), in keeping with the local practice. Having grown up in Zimbabwe, I can attest to handwashing at the table as a common practice in most African homes. Next, guests are served traditional starters, which consist of roasted peanuts, sweet potato, and boiled corn. Drink orders are then taken and served, and the guests are invited to explore the buffet on their own, and to eat “as much as they like, as many times as they like”. The buffet was indeed, very generous. It included a wide variety of soup, salads, breads, game meats, vegetarian dishes, roasts, and desserts. I discuss the food experience in more depth, in Chapter Five.

One night, while waiting at the barbeque queue a fellow Zimbabwean guest remarked, “I wonder how they do so well with these cheap chairs and tables.” She was not impressed with what she saw, and seemed to feel cheated somehow. I
watched her at various intervals during the evening and observed that, rather than watch the entertainers, she spent most of her time gazing at Western tourists, shaking her head, probably wondering why they all seemed so excited. For the most part, she looked disinterested in the entertainment itself. When she caught my eye she smiled briefly and gestured towards the Western tourists, as if to say “What do they find so exciting?”.

Figure 4.5: The handwashing ceremony

Source: www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html

Every night, at a stand next to the meat buffet, a chef invites guests to try the Mopani worm, the highlight of the “local” menu. A guest who eats and swallows this delicacy is awarded a certificate for the achievement. I observed that typically, certificate in hand, the certificate recipient posed with the awarding chef for a photograph, then walked back to the table, and showed off the certificate to friends, spouse, children, tour leader, as the case might be. Often, the friends would become envious, and would in turn announce that they would also brave the Mopani worm test.
Observing how tourists behaved in relation to tasting the worm was a fascinating experience. The ritual typically went as follows. First, they would scrutinise it, before giving the chef the go ahead to place one on their palm. The facial expressions at this stage ranged from disgust, fear, and revulsion, to curiosity, excitement, and childlike thrill. When the worm was placed on their palm, they went on to feel it with between their fingers, then brought it closer to the eye to scrutinise it further. They smelt it, first with hesitation, then with resolve. They rolled it between the fingers again, then they shrugged their shoulders, as if to say, with an air of resignation, “Ah well, too late now!”.

Meanwhile the chef would persuade them with statements like “go ahead, it’s not that bad”. Then, with an expression of horror drawn on the face, the worm would be thrown into the mouth in the quickest way possible, and swallowed with minimal chewing. A smile of achievement would follow, and relief would be written all over the face. The chef then had the guest spell their name, after which the certificate was awarded with a “proud father-ly” “congratulations!” from the chef. It was then time to pose for a photograph (Figure 4.6), and then dash back to the table to show the certificate off to friends. With each tourist, this seemed to be the standard script of behaviour, with slight deviations, of course, now and then. The certificate would become, I surmised, an important souvenir once the tourist returned home to their countries.

Eatertainers thought tourists’ reactions to the Mopani worm were amusing:

Have you seen the look on their faces when they taste amacimbi [vernacular term for Mopani worm]. They are absolutely petrified! I like to watch the expression on their faces. I can’t help laughing when I see that. (Drummer, Boma Restaurant)

My observations in relation to Mopani worm tasting became more interesting when I noticed the contrast with Western tourists’ consumption of presumably more familiar “Western-style” (I acknowledge here that the label “Western” is homogenising) fast food: fried chicken, French fries, hamburgers, pizza, doughnuts, ice-cream, queen cakes, apple pie, Chelsea buns, ice cream, and scones, sold at fast
food outlets in the CBD. I observed on several occasions that when they bit into a
burger or a slice of pizza, for example, there was not much hesitation on their
faces— at least not the kind I observed when tourists tasted, or tried to taste, a
Mopani worm at the Boma restaurant. With these fast foods, they required no
persuasion to take a bite. In a fast food restaurant, almost oblivious to what they
were eating (as contrasted with the scrutiny of the Mopani worm), they chatted
away, like people who felt safe in a familiar environment, doing familiar things,
eating familiar food.

![Image of a tourist biting into a Mopani worm]

Figure 4.6: Tourist posing while biting into a Mopani worm

Source: jasonaroundtheworld.com

I noted that everything about the fast food restaurants at Victoria Falls was designed
to appear “familiar” to Western tourists. It was no accident that the music playing in
the restaurants included popular internationally known Western artists such as
Michael Bolton, Robbie Williams, the Backstreet Boys, Celine Dion, Michael
Jackson, Janet Jackson, Babyface, Phil Collins, Natasha Beddingfield, and Britney
Spears. Many locals dined there too—another point of difference between cultural eatertainment restaurants and fast food restaurants.

Returning to the Boma experience, within half an hour of the commencement of dinner service, various forms of eatertainment would begin. First, a group of dancers entered the restaurant with a burst of local music, sung in vernacular. Their leader introduced each of their performances: “These are songs sung by our forefathers as part of the rainmaking ceremony”. The female dancers were clad in short, printed skirts and tops. The dancing itself was full of energy, and rather strenuous. On more than one occasion I cringed, thinking the dancers might have hurt themselves, from pounding their bare feet on the restaurant’s concrete floor.

I noticed that while the dancing was taking place, a face painter walked around the restaurant offering free face-painting (Figure 4.7). There were various designs to choose from, from a range of wild animals found in Africa, such as kudu, elephant, and hippopotamus, among others.

![Figure 4.7: Facial evidence of the experience: free face-painting](http://www.morningmirror.africanherd.com)
Meanwhile, moving from table to table, a fortuneteller, dressed in an outfit made from feathers and animal skin, talked to guests and invited them to his hut (a little mud and brick appendage to the main restaurant building) where he offered to tell their fortune for one United States dollar (Figure 4.8).

![Figure 4.8: One dollar for your fortune](Source: www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html)

Also moving from one table to the next, a local folklore teller recited stories, mostly to children, but also to adults who signalled interest. His recitals were in English, and I wondered whether he faced challenges in translating concepts and terms from Shona or Ndebele to English. For example, in Shona folklore, there are mythical creatures which do not exist in Western literature. It would be a struggle for him to find a semantic equivalent for such objects in English. I tipped him one American dollar and requested a story from him. To my astonishment, he chose to recite for me a quasi-biblical story, complete with fictional details about Jesus and his disciples. The story was intended as a moral lesson about the virtue of generosity. I was disappointed that I had not been told a Shona story, which I could have found more appropriate and enjoyable in the eatertainment context. Once again, it was
perhaps my positionality as a “local” which meant that I was not perceived as the ideal audience for Shona folklore, for example. Had I been a Western (that is, white) tourist, I very likely would have been entertained with a local folklore story. There was no shortage of those stories in the storyteller’s repertoire.

Towards the end of service, a drumming show would begin. The drumming band leader, a middle-aged man with a hoarse, but deep voice, greeted everybody, and announced, “Tonight, we are gonna have a drumming show in which everyone is going to participate”. This was typically received with enthusiasm from all in the restaurant, with a shout of “Yeah!” or “Yeeey!” Faces lit up with eager expectation, and some guests would move their chairs closer to the show. Guests were each given a small *jembe* drum. With his band, the leader proceeded to beat out an impressive repertoire of African drum rhythms that would fill the restaurant’s ambience. The sound drowned every voice and, and guests had to halt conversation. Any verbal communication was overpowered by the powerful sound of the African *jembe* drum. Next, the lead drummer would beat out a few notes, and then ask guests to replicate his beat on a count of four each time (Figure 4.9).

![The drumming lesson](https://www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html)

**Figure 4.9: The drumming lesson**

*Source: www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html*
The beats got more complex with each subsequent round, and the drummer seemed happy to show off his skill, and appeared flattered when his audience failed dismally in their attempt to mimic his drumming skills.

After about fifteen minutes of drumming with the rest of the band, the leader would ask: “Do you still want some more”, and typically, there was a resounding “Yes” from guests, which drew smiles from all band members, delighted that their show had been received so well. Following several more rounds, the leader would invite everyone to join in the “party” and the centre of the restaurant (Figure 4.10). I captured the euphoric behaviours that followed this exhortation in my fieldnotes:

The leader of the performance group invites everyone to join in the “party” and the centre of the restaurant. The drum beat has escalated, and a good number of tourists rise to their feet and join in the dancing on the dance floor. All kinds of dances can be observed, in rhythm, out of rhythm, fast, slow, energetic, and lethargic. There are accidents as guests bump against each other, step on each other’s feet, poke each other in the face, and shove each other with elbows, lost in having a good time. (Fieldnotes, November 2011)

Figure 4.10: The party: A young boy dances to the drum at the Boma

Source: www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html

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At the end, the leader would announce “Thank you everyone. This is the end of the drumming show.” After yelling some protesting sounds of “Encore”, which the drummers smiled at, flattered again, but not heeding, tourists would get back to their tables, and start making preparations to pay and leave the restaurant. Meanwhile the drummers took a five minute break and returned to perform Imbube music, an African style Acapella. Their songs included some vernacular renditions, as well as a cover of the popular “The lion sleeps tonight”, popularised by its use in a Walt Disney movie, the Lion King. They advertised CDs of their music, and occasionally, tourists would purchase a copy.

On their way out, some tourists also purchase craft souvenirs from two elderly, grey haired men who sat in the restaurant quietly, almost inconspicuous, perched on stools, carving and polishing wooden versions of the local wild animals (Figure 4.11). Guests, typically Western, would scrutinise the various carvings, then bargain, and occasionally purchased one or two pieces. The carvers charged very little, some pieces were sold for only $1, a pittance, given the kind and amount of work that went into each piece.

Figure 4.11: Two dollars apiece: Wood carvers showing off their art

Source: www.bomarestaurant.com/gallery.html
Mama Africa Eating House

Mama Africa Eating House is a small restaurant located in the CBD of Victoria Falls (Figure 4.12). The restaurant is marketed online as a traditional “township style” restaurant:

Mama Africa Eating House is a traditional township style place of eating. For entertainment there is a live township band. Private sitting can be arranged. Select something different- our menu contains dishes from all over the African continent. You can choose to sit inside the brightly lit coloured rooms, on the open air verandah or in the garden. Enjoy our local township jazz style live band. Dancing is always welcome. (Source: www.dingani.com)

Figure 4.12: “Township-style”: Mama Africa Eating House

Source: author’s fieldnotes

The Pan-African description of the menu (“from all over the African continent”) is interesting, in that it portrays the restaurant as an aggregate cultural experience, rather than a singular expression of local, Zimbabwean food culture. This implicit appropriation of African cultural authority is, however, problematic, from an object authenticity perspective, as it leads one to question which dishes on the menu
originated from all over the African continent. Indeed, my experience at the restaurant did not confirm the claim of “dishes from all over the African continent” to be legitimate. In reality, the “African” part of the menu was limited to a few local (Zimbabwean) dishes such as peanut chicken, local greens, and sadza, a maize-meal porridge, which, from my personal Zimbabwean upbringing, is an important part of the daily diet in Zimbabwean households, among the African community. The phrasing of the marketing message may therefore be an attempt to heighten the appeal of the restaurant, by widening the breadth of cultural capital which may be acquired by tourists upon consuming the restaurant experience.

With regard to eatertainment, at Mama Africa, the staging of culture was not as overt and deliberate, as it was at the Boma. An ensemble of five men and two female singers constituted the eaterainment band (Figure 4.13). When I inquired about what kind of music they performed, I was informed by one of the waiters that they sang “African jazz”. During dinner service, the band performed covers of international songs, such as Tracy Chapman’s “Baby can I hold you”, and “Malaika”, a widely known Swahili song. The performance was very “low key”, nothing like the energy of the young male dancers at the Kingdom, Boma, or Amulonga restaurants. Towards the show, there was a lack of enthusiasm among guests, in marked contrast to the excitement I witnessed at the Boma, as I wrote in my fieldnotes:

No one seems to be very excited about the band’s entertainment, the band itself included. They get only a few, indifferent claps at the end of their routine. There are no tips that I see offered to them. They do not seem to expect them either. Few claps. Thank you very much. Have a good night. And they are forgotten. (Fieldnotes, December 2011)

In between the band’s performances, a selection of international music is played from a hi-fidelity system. The playlist could described as “Western”, and included songs such as Dobie Gray’s “Loving Arms”, and Lionel Richie’s “Endless Love”. On reflection, it is these songs that are more likely to be heard in African households around Zimbabwe, than the songs sung by “traditional” groups at the Boma restaurants. In this particular instance, I noted, the entertainment in this restaurant
was more reflective of contemporary, day to day, Zimbabwean lifestyle, yet tourists might consider it “inauthentic”, in an object authenticity sense. Similarly, band members were dressed in what the average person on the Zimbabwean street would wear: golf t-shirts, sandals, denim skirt, sneakers, cargo shorts or some type of pants. The average local person on Victoria Falls streets did not don animal skin. The local performance groups, were, it can be argued, clinging to a past. I return to a discussion of these observations in Chapter Five.

Figure 4.13: “African jazz” at Mama Africa Eating House

Source: author’s fieldnotes

Amulonga Restaurant

The Amulonga (meaning, “by the river”) is housed within the A’Zambezi River Lodge, located along the Zambezi River, which marks the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia (Figure 4.14). The restaurant serves a buffet menu which
includes a variety of soups, breads, salads, grilled meats, and a choice of desserts. The restaurant prides itself on local game and grilled crocodile.

During dinner service, three groups of local performers entertain diners at the restaurant. One is a group of youths who play marimba, an African musical instrument in the percussion family. The other is a group of Shangani dancers who perform Shangani and Zulu dances. They invite guests to participate in the show, although they seemed content with guests watching and clapping in applause at the end of the show. When there were very few diners in the restaurant, they would perform only one or two dances.

![Figure 4.14: A blend of novelty and familiarity at the Amulonga Restaurant](image)

*Source: author’s fieldnotes*

As the picture above shows, the restaurant interior is an interesting mix of local ethnic architecture and Western-style table linen and arrangements. Therefore “localness” is tempered with Westernness, to create an “in-betweenness” that eludes categorisation within the “authentic-inauthentic” spectrum. The contradictions inherent in such a cultural landscape become the raw material for contestation in
touristic quest and evaluation of “authenticity” within the eatertainment venues of Victoria Falls. From a business perspective, such cultural representations are plausibly intended to create interest among tourists, without overwhelming them—simultaneously appealing to their quest for novelty, and reassuring them with a significant degree of familiarity (for example white table cloths, sparkling wine glasses, silver cutlery, and white crockery).

The marimba band consisted of six young men, who introduced themselves as the “Kings of the Jungle Marimba Band” who would be “playing for you African music and Western music”. I found it interesting that their repertoire included a rendition of “The lion sleeps tonight” and “Malaika”, which were also sung at Mama Africa and the Boma. I remarked informally after the show to one member of the band that these songs seemed popular among the singing groups at Victoria Falls. He explained that these were “signature” African songs:

These songs are synonymous with Africa. They are well known around the world. The moment people hear one of these songs, they think of Africa. They are signature African songs. (Marimba player, Amulonga restaurant)

The third group were the Makishi dancers (Figure 4.15). A narrator introduced each performance and provided brief, interesting information about the Makishi tribe. He informed the guests that the Makishi tribe originated in Angola. He talked about their “mysterious customs” which have “invoked fear” among visitors; and about how the group was formed in an effort to preserve traditional practices for the benefit of younger generations. The Makishi dancers were dressed in masks, which, according to the narrator, were very heavy. The performance included a circumcision dance, and a “family dance about a father teaching his son to dance”. I noticed how some guests left the table to be closer to the show. They appeared to scrutinise the masks, and the children in the restaurant appeared to be frightened by them.
After the Makishi dancers exited, the Zulu dancers took to the stage, singing “warrior dances”. The leader introduced the group as *Umkankaso Wamajaha*. Their performances included *Umchongoyo*, a dance for celebrating a good harvest, *Isitshikitsha*, a Ndebele dance, *Imbube* (also performed at the Boma and White White Waters), and not surprisingly, a rendition of “The lion sleeps tonight”, as well as some songs in vernacular.

**The Jungle Junction Restaurant**

The Jungle Junction is the buffet restaurant at the five-star Victoria Falls Hotel. The menu, which include a large variety of classic French cuisine (for example, cheese cake, crème brulee, and cauliflower au gratin) does not carry the cultural coding characteristic of the Boma. The cultural show at the Jungle Junction began around 7:30 in the evening. The group leader acted as narrator and introduced each song performance, explaining the origin, the African tribe it belonged to, and the context in which it was sung traditionally. The diners, who were virtually all white, listened and watched very attentively, but, unlike at the other restaurants, they did not participate in the show. Some of the dancers seemed very young, and I estimated
that they would be below the age of nine or ten. There were three groups, the Shangani dancers, the Makishi dancers, and the Nyawu dancers (Figure 4.17).

Performers described how much they enjoyed their work, one of them describing his work as an addiction:

I’m addicted to this work, this lifestyle. I can’t be anything else other than a dancer. When I dance, and guests are cheering, I get a high like no other. It’s like a drug. If I have to quit this, I won’t be the same person.

We are passionate about our art and because of that we are able to create a memory that stays with them for the rest of their lives. When they go back to Germany, or to America, wherever, they always remember the experience we gave them.

![Figure 4.16: Masked Makishi dancers, Jungle Junction Restaurant,](http://www.classictravel.com/hotels/the-victoria-falls-hotel)

The narrator described the Makishi as a secretive group:
“a very secretive group. Each boy (the initiate) makes his own mask, so that his identity remains a secret… These people believe that they are possessed by some kind of animal spirit. (Narrator and group leader, Jungle Junction Restaurant)

These details seemed to perplex some of the guests, from the look on their faces. Some stopped eating to listen to the narrator. Similar to what I observed at the Amulonga, the Makishi dancers, in their masks, were the highlight of the show. As one dancer remarked:

Out of all the three groups who perform at the restaurant, we, the Makishi, are the tourists’ favourite group. Our masks intrigue them. After the show, occasionally, they come up to us, with questions about how we have managed to keep our traditions alive. (dancer, Jungle Junction restaurant)

At the end of the show, the narrator appealed to guests to “support” the dancers with a tip. The tip box is placed at the centre of the stage as the performers leave. A good number of guests walked over to the box and dropped a note or two.

White Waters Restaurant

The White Waters restaurant, at the four star Kingdom Hotel, is the main food outlet, which serves a buffet menu at dinner. The company webpage describes the restaurant as follows:

This is the main hotel restaurant, a large open room with towering ceilings and domes surrounded by striking water features. With live traditional dancers and singers performing at each dinner, this is a truly authentic African experience you want to experience. The Whitewaters Restaurant has a maximum seating capacity of 250 pax.

The menu was not much different from that served at the Jungle junction, and included a large number of “grill-while-you-wait” local game meats. However, in one corner of the buffet service area, and hardly noticeable, was a small section labelled “Zimbabwean dishes”, which included a stew and sadza, the staple starch
consumed daily by most locals. I noted how guests seemed not to notice this section of the buffet at all. It appeared to me that the restaurant managers did not intend to draw any attention to this part of the menu; the section was positioned “out of the way” of tourists, who appeared content with the rest of the buffet. A few would walk over to the “Zimbabwean dishes” section, but they very rarely decided to taste the food. This contrasts with the Boma restaurant, which actively sought to draw tourists’ attention to the “local” delicacies.

As the restaurant’s website states, each night, guests are entertained by live local dancers and singers. A group of young men perform various warrior dances, in a style very similar to the warrior dances at the Amulonga and the Jungle Junction. The similarity was so close that taking notes became a monotonous formality, as I drew no new insights from the task, and realised that I had possibly reached saturation point.

I was not surprised to observe that after the dancing, there was a costume change, in preparation for a performance of *Imbube* Acapella. Again, the song, “The lion sleeps tonight” was performed. As I ready noted, this song was part of the repertoire of nearly every singing group I encountered at eaterainment venues. In a fashion similar to what I observed at the other restaurants, the singers introduced each song with details of the context in which it was performed by “our forefathers” or “our ancestors”.

The performers invited guests to dance with them on the stage. Occasionally, guests would respond, producing some entertaining behaviour in the restaurant. In my fieldnotes, I describe one of these incidents:

> The dancers take a break and soon return with an even more excited delivery. This time a white male guest joins them in the dancefloor. He does not wait to be invited or to be led to the dancefloor…He is mimicking the dancing, the warrior-like facial expressions, the whistling. His partner, who he is dining with on the night, is laughing helplessly, and taking lots of pictures, and more of them. One of the singers improvises quickly like someone who has been in this situation before. He places on the white dancer’s head a hat
like that worn in the movies by African chiefs and kings. Animal skin, with various embellishments that I can’t quite describe. The diners seem to read that this is a moment that should be captured, and more photographs are taken. He continues with his hilarious, disastrous moves until the end of the song, and his “mentor” gives him a congratulatory hand shake. The rest of the group joins in and shakes his hand, signalling their approval. *(Fieldnotes, November 2011).*

The above scenario is characteristic of liminal zones which often emerge in touristic space. I discuss this phenomenon in Chapter Six, which tackles the subject of existential authenticity. The performers at the White Waters remarked that when guests joined in the dance, and especially when they asked to be taught how to do the traditional dances (as depicted in Figure 4.17), it felt to them like a big compliment to their show:

> It’s a big compliment when tourists ask us to teach them our dances. It’s hilarious to watch, because they struggle to master any of the steps. But that’s the point, to just have fun.

The more disastrous and out-of-sync with music the dancing was on the part of the tourists, the more eatertainers seemed to enjoy watching it. If the tourist failed to coordinate his/her movements and fell to the ground, for example, the more raucous the laughter and cheering was from the audience. Tourists seemed to be competing to make fools of themselves, because, in liminal space, rules were meant to be broken. Indeed, it might be more accurate to say in this instance that as far as participating in the liminoid zone was concerned, there were no rules. There were no negative consequences of failure; there was no ridicule. Recklessness and abandonment were, in this spare, approved of, at least while the atmosphere of liminality endured.
Managerial input

With regard to the content of eatertainment performances, it was interesting to note how hotel managers distanced themselves from the content of eatertainment, emphasising that their interest was primarily creating employment and “getting youths off the street”. They were therefore reluctant to make any comment regarding the content of eatertainment. Some entertainers’ accounts contradicted managers’ statements in this regard:

Managers keep an eye on what we do. If they think guests do not enjoy certain parts of our show, they ask us to replace them with other dances and songs. They do have a say in that. There is a dance that requires certain poles in the background, but they would not let us erect the poles, said it would spoil the interior of the restaurant. (Dancer, Jungle Junction Restaurant).
4.5 Zimbabwean Music and Dance Performances as Eatertainment

Zimbabwean (Ethnic) Music and Dance

In order to further understand the cultural context of this study, it is important to provide some background on African and Zimbabwean dance, music and aesthetics, which converge to create the restaurant eatertainment experience for tourists at Victoria Falls. Among traditional African communities, music and dance are closely intertwined with ceremonial life and spirituality (Asante, 1998). African dance belongs to several families (Asante, 1998, 2000; Manatsa, 2006, Nicholls, 1998). First, ritual dances are initiated by the elders, and they represent, as Asante (2000) puts it, a serious affair. Even when they carry a festive element, they also always carry an air of solemnity. Secondly, commemorative dances are linked to political and social trends of the times, giving them an inherently flexible nature. Thirdly, dyelic dances are visual texts that document historical events associated with a cultural group, providing organic memory that creates a connection between the past and the present. Finally, griotic dances go beyond documenting history, and are enacted as ritual dramas that carries a spiritual significance. However, in whatever form, African dance is conterminous with the music that accompanies it, and with visual art that embellishes (Nicholls, 1998).

These broad characterisations of African music and dance are valid for Zimbabwe, and therefore provide a basic framework for positioning eatertaining performances at Victoria Falls (Asante, 1998, Manatsa, 2006). Examples of traditional dances which are commonly performed as showcases of Zimbabwean traditional arts, in tourism and other social spaces, include *Muchongoyo*, *Jerusarema*, and *Mhande* (Asante, 1998, 2000; Manatsa, 2006). Each dance is performed in a specific context, that is, for specific ceremonies or rituals, with set accompanying instruments and paraphernalia. As an illustration, the following model (Table 4.2) provides contextual details for *Mhande*, as given by Manatsa (2006).
Table 4.2: Mhande: A Shona rainmaking dance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MHANDE DANCE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of dance</strong></td>
<td><em>Mhande</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic group</strong></td>
<td><em>Karanga</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural region</strong></td>
<td>Masvingo province – Bikita, Chibi, Gutu, Mwenezi, Zaka, Shurugwi, Zvishavane districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function and purpose</strong></td>
<td>Spirit possession, <em>mukwerera/mutoro</em>, rainmaking, recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>Adults (men and women). Children take part at the periphery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scheduling</strong></td>
<td>Spring – <em>Chirimo</em>; September – <em>Guyana</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costumes, attire, material traits</strong></td>
<td>Black and white cloth, ritual axe (<em>gano</em>), knobbyrrie (<em>tsvimbo</em>), headgear (<em>ngundu</em>), bangles (<em>ndarira</em>), beads (<em>chuma</em>), lion skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruments</strong></td>
<td>Drums (<em>gandira</em>) (<em>hadzi</em> – female and <em>rume</em> – male); leg rattles (<em>magagada, magavhu</em>); hand claps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Songs** | *Havo ndibaba, Tovera mudzimu dzoka,*  
*Dzinmwa munase,*  
*Tora vutabwako 5. Dziva remvura,*  
*Choenda Machakaire, Ndaniwa nemvura* |

Source: Manatsa (2006)

The Role of Religion in African Music and Dance

Manatsa (2006) explains that at the centre of human existence among African communities is the belief in a spirit world. Accompanying this belief are “practices, ceremonies and rituals where music and dance play a significant role” (p.255). Music and dance are, within this belief system, enablers for the possession of a spirit medium, in the process creating a devotional frame of mind and establishing a link with the Creator. When a medium is possessed, the spirit, representing the voice of ancestors, will offer advice and take requests from the living. As such, Indigenous African values in Zimbabwe are characterised by a reverence for ritual ceremonies.
organised by the elders of a community, and music and dance retain special significance in these contexts, even to the present day (Manatsa, 2006). Thus, African dance, as an avenue of spiritual expression, is in effect, context determined (Nicholls, 1998).

Within the ceremonies’ calendar, there are many rituals that are initiated each year by the chiefs in liaison with spirit media. For example, in Shona culture, three major ceremonies are held, themed on the arrival of the rainy season, the period after harvests, and finally, the pre-planting period. There are many others, detailed discussion of which is a task of forbidding magnitude. However, the examples given here provide sufficient illustration of the interface between music, dance and religion.

It is important to note however, as Asante (2000) points out, that Zimbabwean dance has continually evolved, in response to different environmental forces, including changing tastes, external influences (for example popular culture), and changing socio-politics over the course of Zimbabwean history, through the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial eras. Asante opines that the transformation has been one of context, rather than content, adding that this change has engendered aesthetic changes in the dance that have become a permanent part of Zimbabwean artistic character. However, I will argue here that because context builds content, Asante’s opinion might be flawed in portraying the content of Zimbabwean dance as unchanging. Content and context feed off each other, so that it is difficult to see how either can change without setting off a change in the other.

**The African/Zimbabwean Music and Dance Aesthetic**

While the African continent is vast, and its people diverse, scholars have identified some common standards of beauty that define the African aesthetic, applicable to various art forms. These include luminosity, self-composure, youthfulness, clarity of form and detail, complexity of composition, balance, and symmetry, and smoothness of finish (Crowley, 1966; Vogel, 1986). These same standards also inform the Zimbabwean music and dance aesthetic (Asante, 1985, 2000). Asante (2000) notes
that the aesthetic dimension of Zimbabwean dance is contained within its rhythm and movement, informed by its cultural and societal values.

Consistent with the broad characterisation of the African aesthetic, the ethnic Zimbabwean aesthetic is also largely a moral one. For example, in griot dances, an important goal is moral education. An illustration of this is found in initiation dances where young men are taught about respect for self and others, standards of conduct, and societal integration (Nicholls, 1998). This educative role of dance and music is enabled in part by its largely participatory nature, which eliminates barriers between dancers and onlookers (Asante, 1998; Nicholls, 1998). Thus divisions between stage and audience are blurred and the two regions merge into one whole.

The inherently evolving nature of dance, and indeed, all other art forms, means that stylisations and presentations continually change. To accommodate this change, Asante (2000) proposes an additional category of dance, which she terms “neo-traditional”, and is the result of the influence of international, intercultural and intracontinental influences on traditional dance forms. However, it would be misleading to overemphasise the role of external influences, as evolutionary forces can come from within, and changing stylisations do not always mean Westernisation (Asante, 2000).

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has painted a picture of eatertainment space at Victoria Falls. I have outlined how the destination’s eatertainment spaces are socially constructed zones where tourists interact with one another, with locals, and with a variety of rituals and cultural objects. The description demonstrates that the tourist experience and the context in which that experience occurs are inseparable. The chapter has also highlighted the performativity of tourist eatertainment experiences, emphasising that tourists are not passive observers or gazers. They actively participate in the production of experience at the various venues, and engage with cultural objects beyond the visual gaze. In the next chapter I tackle the contestation of object
authenticity as it pertains to the cultural objects and touristic rituals outlined in this chapter.
5. CONTESTED OBJECT AUTHENTICITY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of object authenticity quests and its importance in tourist eatertainment, which entails examining three interrelated themes: subjective importance and perceptions of object-related authenticity (African and Western tourists), authentication forms and processes (that is, the politics of object authenticity), and Othering and Otherness (cultural objects and, in particular, food as the “authentic Other”). With regard to the first theme, which is of particular significance in relation to the overall study goal, I highlight the key behavioural and attitudinal differences between Western and African tourists, although I make these tentatively, given the limited scale of the study, and its format as a “tale of the field”. The chapter is presented as a contest of often divergent voices on the quest for, and notions of, object authenticity.

The Western tourist voice is represented predominantly (but not exclusively) through online reviews, which were much more candid and rich, compared to data that were obtained via interviews, perhaps due to my positionality as a local (an “insider”), interviewing cultural “outsiders, as highlighted earlier. I discuss the problem of untranslatability (that is, lack of conceptual equivalence), of the term “authenticity”, to Zimbabwean vernacular. Further, I demonstrate that African tourists reflect on, and evaluate, cultural eatertainment experiences primarily in terms of “aesthetics”, entertainment value, and “artistry”, rather than “authenticity”. This has significant implications for understanding the cultural relativity of object authenticity as a touristic quest, and for cultural tourism establishments which cater to an African tourist market. I also suggest that Wang’s (1999, 2000) existential authenticity, being independent of the “authenticity” of toured objects, is more universally applicable to tourists, and is therefore an appropriate theoretical framework for studies which do not distinguish different cultural groups.
5.2 African and Western Tourists: Contested Authenticity Quests?

Conceptual Equivalence and Translating “Authenticity” to Vernacular

The starting point in understanding the role of (object) authenticity in tourist experiences of eatertainment is to tackle the interlingual communication challenges that arose with attempting English-to-Shona translations of the term “authenticity”. Specifically, in the case of interviews conducted with Indigenous Zimbabwean tourists in vernacular (Shona and/or Ndebele), there were particular translation challenges because there is no vernacular equivalent term for “authenticity”. Nevertheless, some translation attempts in this respect have been made. For example, an unofficial, online English-to-Shona dictionary (Mashumba, 2012), translates the term authenticity to chaizvo izvo. This translation, while close, is far from “equivalent”, however, because the backwards translation of chaizvo izvo back to English does not lead precisely to “authenticity”. As a native Shona speaker, I will argue here that in fact chaizvo izvo is not at all an equivalent of authenticity, but it can connote something being “true”, “complete”, “unquestionable”, or “absolute”, without the copy-and-original, or claimed-and-actual context carried by authenticity. Thus the relation of chaizvo izvo with “authenticity” is only a very imprecise, incongruent one. This linguistic challenge alone might be sufficient basis for arguing that for African tourists, authenticity is indeed a foreign concept: if it was of any considerable importance among the Indigenous Zimbabwean communities, then there would be a term for it in their language. This argument is also adopted by Kashgary (2011, p. 54), when he argues, in reference to the Arabic “hijab”, that

...because this word represents a concept which is important enough to be talked about in English, English has developed a very concise form for referring to it, i.e., “veil”. Still, the complex concept embedded in the Arabic “hijab” may not be matched by the concepts associated with the English “veil”.

For many African tourists, the subject of authenticity seemed foreign, not relatable, even perplexing, or irrelevant, to eatertainment contexts, notwithstanding my
attempts to translate it and explain it in different ways, in vernacular. As one Zimbabwean tourist commented (in vernacular):

I’m not sure I know what you are talking about, I’m trying to understand what you are asking, but I’m still not quite clear. (*Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts*)

The translation challenges arising from interlingual communication in qualitative studies, illustrated above, have been discussed extensively (for example Croot, Lees, & Grant, 2011; Herdman, Fox-Rushby, & Badia, 1997, 1998; Kashgary, 2011; Larkin, Dierckx de Casterlé, & Schotsmans, 2007; Squires, 2009; van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). This has created a vast body of literature and theoretical models. In relation to the English-to-Shona/Ndebele translation of “authenticity” and its synonyms, the issue of “conceptual equivalence” is particularly relevant. Conceptual equivalence is a central issue in translation, and refers to a technically and conceptually accurate translated communication of a concept spoken by a participant (Croot et al., 2011; Kashgary, 2011; Larkin et al., 2007; Squires, 2009). Researchers cannot assume that constructs (in this case, “authenticity”) will exist or be interpreted the same across cultures.

Associated with this is the concept of “semantic equivalence”, which is concerned with the transfer of meaning across languages, and with achieving a similar effect on respondents in different languages. Put differently, research is not “language free”, and meanings in the source language cannot always be transferred successfully to all target languages. Languages influence what can be expressed, and from this follows that social reality as experienced is unique to one’s own language, and those who speak different languages would therefore perceive the world differently (van Nes et al., 2010). Languages not only organise the world according to existing categories, they also articulate their own (Kashgary, 2011). Therefore, “untranslatability” issues will arise whenever the categories of socio-semiotic meaning conveyed by a source expression do not coincide exactly with those of a comparable expression in the target language (Kashgary, 2011, Ping, 1999).
These phenomena are true of the attempts to translate authenticity into Shona and Ndebele. There was a challenge for both myself as researcher, and for participants, in trying to ensure conceptual and semantic equivalence when probing, and responding in non-English interviews, respectively, on matters relating to (possible) authenticity quests. There was always the risk, as Squires (2009) points out, that a poor translation would occur, leading to the alteration or loss of intended meanings. The different ways of seeing the world constructed by the different languages therefore introduced challenges at both the ontological and epistemological levels, especially because the achievement of the study goal was highly dependent on the flow of meanings.

However, conceptual equivalence is not an absolute condition for translatability. As Kashgary (2011) points out, the fact that a word does not have an English equivalent does not mean that it is completely untranslatable: where this challenge occurs, untranslatability is circumvented by abandoning equivalence at the word level in favour of non-equivalent terms that still achieve an acceptable degree of equivalence at the text level. Indeed, it can be argued, chasing after the elusive concept of equivalence is futile, as there is never exact equivalence between two languages in terms of lexical items and concepts (Kashgary, 2011). Thus equivalence is, at best, usually just a theoretical ideal, based on the illusion of possible symmetry between languages. Therefore, it has been argued, equivalence is desirable, but not in its absolute mathematical sense (Xiabin, 2005).

Where word equivalence is not possible, as was true in the case of Shona/Ndebele and “authenticity”, other kinds of equivalents can be sought, including functional equivalents, explanatory equivalent, referential equivalent, and connotative equivalent (Ghazala, 2004). With these alternatives, using a “loan” word, or a “loan” word plus a short explanation, can be more precise in rendering the full meanings of difficult-to-translate concepts. Embracing these options, and realising that sameness to the source language is neither possible nor desirable, it is much better to aspire, not for conceptual equivalence, but for “dynamic equivalence”, which aims at reproducing in the receptor’s language the closest natural equivalent of the message in the source language, both in terms of meaning and in terms of style (Kashgary,
2011). Thus instead of equivalence, an unrealisable target, the goal is to achieve the highest degree of approximation, using synonyms, paraphrases, and grammatical variations (Kashgary, 2011). Because dynamic equivalence draws on both function and meaning, it is subject to change according to the variation in socio-cultural context of the receptor. However, as Xiabin (2005) asserts, equivalence and the techniques to achieve cannot be dismissed altogether, because they represent a translation reality.

In this study, while there was no one-word equivalent for the term authenticity in either Shona or Ndebele, there were alternative ways of expressing related ideas, for both the participants and myself. Related terms and expressions such as “original” could be translated more easily, as there were close-enough terms in either vernacular language. What I am suggesting here is that, out of the three possible outcomes of a test for semantic equivalence (items are *easy* to translate; items are *difficult* to translate; items are *impossible* to translate), the verdict on the translatability of authenticity into either Shona or Ndebele may be stated as such: at the text level, authenticity was neither easy nor completely impossible to translate; rather, authenticity was *difficult* to translate. At the word level, however, authenticity was simply impossible to translate. Hence an important aspect of conveying and interpreting meanings during interviews was to explore the “semantic space” (Herdman et al., 1998) in which the word “authenticity” was located, in order to define its relation with other worlds in Shona, Ndebele, and English, which have some aspects in common with it (see Table 5.1).

In any bilingual or multilingual (which also meant multicultural) situation where I found myself over the course of six months at Victoria Falls, however, (and there were many) there was always a significant amount of metacognitive cross-cultural stress, arising from the demands of metacognitive monitoring in contexts where competence in one culture is more complete than in the other (Rudmin, 2010). Like Rudmin (2010, p. 321), when communicating in cross-cultural contexts, I often found that “my breathing was suspended, my shoulders were up, my mind and body were ready in anticipation of subtle interpersonal negotiations of language use and perhaps language switch”. As a result, most interviews with Zimbabwean
participants involved “code-switching”, a term which refers to the alternate use of two or more languages, (Milroy & Muysken, 1995). Depending on the language background of participants, I combined English, Shona, and Ndebele, and where I could, some phrases from South african languages, especially Zulu, which has a lot in common with Ndebele, Zimbabwe’s second most commonly spoken language. For the most part, however, with Zimbabwean tourists, I spoke in Shona, my first language, code-switching to Ndebele, when I felt the situation demanded it. I was surprised to note that even where (Zimbabwean) participants had limited proficiency in English, they often used its phrases—this is a very common practice in Zimbabwe, perhaps because it is associated with higher economic and socio-cultural status.

Table 5.1: Authenticity: Conceptual equivalence and semantic space in Shona

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authenticity Equivalence/non-equivalence dimension</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word equivalence</td>
<td>Impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic equivalence</td>
<td>Possible, with difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closest natural equivalent in Shona; Ndebele</td>
<td>Chaizvo izvo; oqobo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-level equivalence</td>
<td>Possible, with difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic space and equivalence possibility</td>
<td>Original (text level equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real (text level equivalence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genuine (text level equivalence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual (word level equivalence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free from forgery (text level equivalence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not false or copied (text level equivalence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verified (text level equivalence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translatability verdict</td>
<td>Difficult but not completely impossible to translate at the text level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impossible to translate at the word level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation strategies</td>
<td>Short explanations using closest semantic space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Object Authenticity Quests?

Having laid bare the relevant translation issues, the question of whether tourists (African and Western) do search for object authenticity can now be tackled, through analysing a combination of netnographic reviews, interviews, and observation data. In the case of interviews, respondents framed their own accounts of eatertainment experiences, with no initial reference to authenticity on my part. By letting participants express their own criteria for evaluating eatertainment experiences, I was in a position to determine, in part, whether or not their tales betrayed a quest for object authenticity. In this relation, it was especially interesting to observe in the interviews, that none of the African tourists broached the subject of authenticity (directly or using related terminologies such as “real” or “original” culture) on their own, when asked to describe their experience in the restaurants (I return to a discussion of African tourist quests in the context of eatertainment, later).

In contrast to their African counterparts, however, Western tourists, when describing their eatertainment experiences in interviews, frequently referred to (a search for) authenticity (in the object related sense), either directly or with related terms or phrases, for example:

- This was such an interesting introduction to the authentic local culture. It was such a pleasant addition to the food and everything else, this opportunity to get insight into the traditions of the ethnic tribes. *(American tourist, Interview transcripts)*

- It’s nice to get a feel of the traditions here. Most places I have gone to are touristy, they have lost their authenticity, they have become so fake *(Australian tourist, Interview transcripts)*

Further and consistent with this, in their online restaurant reviews of the Boma-Place of Eating, Mama Africa Eating House, White Waters Restaurant (the Kingdom Hotel), the Jungle Junction (the Victoria Falls Hotel), and Amulonga Restaurant
(A’Zambezi River Lodge), Western tourists’ search for, and expectation of object authenticity was even more apparent, as the following excerpts will demonstrate:

… the "show" was very loud and not authentic. We had just spent 12 days in the bush and had seen the real thing. (Handywoman9, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

At your table you order appetizers immediately as well as drinks, and are given a traditional (and authentic) beer–type beverage. (Joelestra, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

While it was entertaining, I didn't really get into it. It didn't seem very authentic, and the entertainers didn't seem very into it either. I guess I can't blame them - if it were my job to perform the same thing every single night, I'd probably lose enthusiasm for it too… I felt like this was all very contrived, but went for the face painting and vodka drink anyway. None of these except the drink cost extra money, but as always a tip was appreciated. (Grateful_travels, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

The breakfast buffet was outstanding (one of the best I have experienced at a hotel) and the evening dinner at Jungle Junction was tremendous. We had gone to the Boma the night prior, and while fun in a juvenile way, Jungle Junction’s entertainment was far more authentic and the quality of the food far surpassed what was offered at the Boma. I highly recommend dinner at Jungle Junction. (Nocavat, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

Only complaint - the dance program at night at the Jungle restaurant felt boring, old, tired, and fake. (Reichen10, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

The Boma dinner at another hotel is rather hokey, I would skip that - there are many nice places to dine including the Palm. (Thecruiseladyseattle, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

There is, in the above examples, very explicit evidence of object authenticity quests, so that it does not require much else to build the case that object authenticity still
matters to many (Western) tourists. Online reviews provide a particularly convincing argument basis in this regard, because they can be seen as the most candid, unmediated, and unrehearsed accounts of tourist experiences. They constitute tourists’ self-interpretive narratives, independent of researcher goals. What is also very clear, however, is the fluidity of authenticity perceptions, whatever “authenticity” means to tourists. Just as definitions of authenticity vary, there are no set criteria as to how tourists actually arrive at their perceptions. For instance, features of the eatertainment experience that were dismissed by some as “contrived”, “unabashedly touristy”, or “fake” were, conversely, embraced by others as signifying a real “African experience”, “authentic”, and so forth. This confirms the social constructionist basis of authenticity evaluations, as tourists offered sometimes diametrically opposite evaluations, regarding the same restaurant, or particular products within its offer. In other words, the case for constructive authenticity (authenticity as a negotiable, subjective reality, existing in the mind, not “out there”; an ascribed attribute) is a very strong one.

On the other hand, from these data, “objective authenticity” (authenticity in the museum-related sense of originals versus fakes, provable through some set, expert, “objective” criteria; a fixed reality, intrinsic in a toured object), simply seems untenable. The pre-requisites for “objectivity” cannot be met: there are no real “originals” or “objective measures” to think about, against which the objects of eatertainment can be weighed up, “objectively”. In other words, the ontological condition of objectivity—that of a single unquestionable reality, is simply impossible. There are multiple subjective realities, as articulated by the fluidity of online tourist reviews, which include plural and even contradictory perceptions about the authenticity of a single cultural object. Regarding cultural objects in eatertainment, it would be hard to find an expert whose views can be absolute, as there are no positivistic tests which can be carried out on a cultural dance, for example, to produce a verdict which is final and beyond debate. Based on these data, therefore, and consistent with the constructive school of thought (Cohen, 1979, 1988, 2002; Wang, 1999, 2000), the authenticity of cultural objects lies, not in the
thing beheld, but “in the eye of the beholder”, in this event, the tourist, as expressed by Chang et al. (2008, p. 391).

The complexity and elusiveness of authenticity perceptions within a constructionist ontology has been demonstrated by a large number of studies in tourism (Beer, 2008; Budruk, White, Wodrich, & Van Riper, 2008; Chhabra, 2010; Revilla & Dodd, 2003; Waitt, 2000; Wall & Xie, 2005; Xie & Wall, 2002; Yang & Wall, 2009). Constructionists agree that it is not so much the objects that tourists see which matter, as far as authenticity perceptions are concerned, but the meanings which they ascribe to them (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2006). In other words, it is meanings, rather than objects per se, which are the source of this complexity. Further, both tangible aspects of the objects, as well as intangibles like the consumption context, can be relevant to tourists’ perception criteria (Tregear, Kuznesof & Moxey, 1998).

The question still remains though, what makes an object of the tourist gaze authentic (or inauthentic) to the viewer? For Kelner (2001), the answer lies in “idealised conceptions”, (which I would suggest is just another way of referring to stereotypes), generated not only by the deliberate efforts of the tourism industry, but also by a variety of non-tourist oriented media, such as film, television, literature, magazines, videos, and so forth. These media generate stereotypical discourses which in turn are imbibed by tourists in intuiting what is authentic, or otherwise, for them. There are therefore multiple actors in the processes of authentication (the negotiation and ascription of authentic status), a subject which I discuss later. At this point, what I am highlighting is that the agency of the tourist in the process of perception formation can easily be overstated. Tourists are but one group in a much larger web of authenticity contestation.

It is perhaps surprising nonetheless that the majority of Western tourists, in their online reviews, dismissed the eatertainment experience as inauthentic, fake, or phoney. Evidently, in these instances, their expectations in relation to object authenticity, whatever they were, were not met. However this is not unique or unusual. Similar findings of inauthenticity perceptions have been documented in
other tourism studies of ethnic cultural representations in tourism. For example Connell (2007) found that although tourists had no real knowledge of Vanuatu culture, they perceived performances of customs as inauthentic. Even more interesting, in the present study, a substantial proportion of tourists felt that they had been the victims of a deliberate “tourist trap”. This suspicion of deliberate deceit was a recurrent theme in online reviews:

Various hawkers approached the tables while we were dining offering different services: fortune telling, selling traditional drinks and the like. It all seemed fake and contrived. All in all, it was a contrived “tourist trap” type of experience. (Richard A, Australian tourist, Tripadvisor)

“Tourist Trap”. This place is so commercialized that it reminded me of the luau at the polynesian cultural center in Hawaii. It's a giant buffet for groups of tourists every night followed by a live show. The food was so-so. There was a large selection of grilled meats, from steak to local games like impala and warthog. We stayed at the Vic Falls hotels which had much better quality food so the food did not impress us. (Avjwc, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

In response to the suspected deceit, some of these tourists went far beyond being mere passive observers, to actively seeking to expose possible duplicity, as the following tales recorded in my fieldnotes demonstrate:

Tonight a young German tourist told me how she tested the fortune teller’s “authenticity”. She deliberately went to have her fortune read twice on the same night. On the first occasion she had her hair down. On the second she had tied it up into a ponytail and altered her outfit somewhat, so that the fortune teller would not recognise her from their first encounter. The fortune teller looked at her with a suspicious eye, and asked her if she had visited him earlier, to which she answered “No”. He then proceeded to throw his bones and predict what was very similar to what he had told her earlier. She could not make up her mind whether or not to believe any of the fortune
teller’s predictions, and she admitted that her authenticity test was flawed. (Fieldnotes, October 2011)

One white tourist asked me whether the fortune teller is “for real”, to which I responded “I don’t know”. A couple told me of how they attempted to establish the fortune teller’s authenticity. The wife went in and had her fortune told. She made a point to ask how many children she would have. The husband then did the same. Their logic was that if their fortunes regarding children matched, as they were husband and wife, then there was a good chance the fortune teller was “for real”. Apparently, the fortune teller’s insights matched, and for this, to them, he was not “fake”. (Fieldnotes, October 2011)

As further evidence of tourists’ suspicion of deceit, the fortuneteller recounted to me, in an informal conversation, that some tourists would attempt to test his “authenticity” by visiting his hut and having their fortunes told more than once on a single night.

There are times when they are suspicious…They will come to me twice, changing the hairstyle so I can’t recognise them, or they may remove a jacket, or whatever, to appear like someone else. But because I’m aware of what they do, I am wary. ..But if I ask, “were you here before”, they always, say, “me, no, never”. They are tricksters. But I’m no fool. I know their game. (Fieldnotes, November 201)

Furthermore, I observed on several occasions that Western tourists paid particular attention to any inconsistencies in information they were given in relation to cultural objects by locals. For instance, I overheard a conversation between a restaurant waitress and a Western tourist, in which the latter was suspicious about the authenticity of the local beer, chibuku, served at the Boma, because it was “chocolatey”, and differed from what he had tasted elsewhere. The waitress confirmed that the beer had been flavoured with chocolate powder and fresh cream, to give it a richer flavour, and to make it more palatable for guests.
Tourist: …This chibuku tastes funny, this is not chibuku. What did you do to it?

Waitress: A lot of guests complain that it’s too sour, when we serve it raw. So we add a bit of cream, and a bit of chocolate powder, to improve the taste. Don’t you like it?

Tourist: Well, it’s not about liking or not liking it. It’s about giving us the real thing. We want the real thing. And I like it sour. It’s good stuff. (Fieldnotes, December 2011)

Such activity on the part of tourists arises in the context of suspicion and distrust. If tourists trusted the tourism industry implicitly to be sincere and honest, to not contrive to cheat them in matters of authenticity, then they would not actively seek to expose deceit, or to verify ‘facts” about cultural objects. Clearly, honesty and sincerity are important to tourists; they do not want to be lied to (Hall, 2007; Yeoman et al., 2007). However, what qualifies as deceit, or duplicity, for tourists? Is replication, for instance, implicated? What about demonstrations of traditions, by locals or other agents? Once again, the answer is more complex than “yes” or “no”.

Just as authenticity is a matter of judgement, as we have established, at least in the context of tourist perceptions, so is deceit. Replication and demonstration are arguably the basis of most eatertainment experiences at Victoria Falls, as they are generally in the tourism industry’s cultural tourism representations. Therefore, if they were to be counted as deceit, then potentially, all commercial tourism enterprises that showcase local cultures in one form or another would be deceitful, given that this entails, at best, culture as “staged” out of the “original” or “historical” context. Then, again, tourists surely realise this already. In that relation, of interest, Hall (2007, p. 1140) asserts, and I agree, that, “replication is not intrinsically immoral unless there is deception”.

Clearly, tourists are tricksters in their own right, although the tricks employed in the above examples are not sophisticated enough to detect deceit, granting that aspects of the eatertainment performances are indeed crafted to deceive tourists in some
form or other. For example, in the example of the couple quoted above, the husband and wife’s fortunes regarding the number of offspring they would have might have matched purely out of coincidence. Alternatively, it could be that the fortuneteller told the same fortune to virtually all tourists who consulted him, as the following tourist suspects:

Speaking of the fortune teller--don't expect an authentic "throwing of the bones"--the same fortune was told, with only very slight variation, to four of us. The face painter, on the other hand, was brilliant! *(Atastefortravel, American tourist, Tripadvisor.com)*

Tourists’ efforts to uncover deceit are impressive, but, obviously, to try to expose deceit, and to actually do so, are quite different. That being so, people do not want to be lied to, not only because it is morally repugnant, but also because they do not want to be taken for fools; to become the subjects of ridicule in tourist jokes (Cohen, 2010). In the case of the fortune teller, however, the suspicion was clearly not one-sided, but mutual. The fortune teller was also suspicious of the deceit by tourists. Specifically, he was suspicious that tourists are suspicious, and so, in that way, both tourists and the fortune teller were involved in a game. What this creates is an element of competition between hosts and guests, each with the desire to outsmart the other, in detecting deceit. They are involved, at that point, in a game of testing the sincerity of the other; neither is prepared to be “taken for a ride”. I would go further here and suggest that this is a “lose-lose” game, as neither side has the tools to expose the potential deceit of the other. Obviously, tourists have little to lose when their tricks are exposed, although they might not wish for their hosts to be aware that they (tourists) suspect deceit. The fortune teller, representing the commercial tourism enterprise, on the other hand, might have something to lose by way of reputation, if he were to be exposed in that way.

Deceit, as suspected by tourists, indicates a concern for the lack of “sincerity” on the part of the tourism industry. Taylor (2001) sees sincerity as the “philosophical cousin” of authenticity (2001, p. 8), and opines that locals and tourists should “meet halfway”. Within his argument, the question as to why tourists care at all about
deceit is answered: “authenticity is valuable only where there is perceived inauthenticity”. The possibility of deceit makes tourists even more enthusiastic to search for what is supposedly honest and sincere. Moreover, while tourists seem doomed in their quest to expose deceit, their attempts on their own, successful or otherwise, are enough to suggest that (Western) tourists are not always as gullible as has been often suggested (Quan & Wang, 2004); instead they often question the veracity of claims made about the authenticity of toured objects by tourism suppliers. They are conscious of, although they cannot prevent, deceit in front stages (Taylor, 2001). It is therefore important for tourism suppliers who cater to Western tourists to manage authenticity perceptions in relation to the cultural representations they might include in their offers for the benefit of tourists.

The analysis so far suggests that tourists have an intuitive sense of the line that separates the authentic from the inauthentic. They then proceed to fill the sides of this divide based on their idealised conceptions, and, as already stated, the questions arise as to who draws the line, who decides where to draw the line, what are the forces that create stereotypes and expectations, which models are authoritative, and to what extent does authority to define authenticity lie with tourists or locals (Keltner, 2001)? These questions constitute what Bruner (1994, p. 400) calls the “layers of contestation”. I tackle some of these questions later in my discussion of “hot” and “cool” authentication, constructs recently introduced to tourism theory by Cohen & Cohen (2012).

Notwithstanding the difficulty of these questions, it is safe to posit that international tourists’ perceptions of authenticity are always ironic in whatever form because as “cultural outsiders”, they “expect some version of authenticity”, though they have “no real knowledge” of the toured cultures in question (Connell, 2007, p. 71). In any authenticity judgement lies the implicit assumption among tourists that they have the prerogative to pass authenticity judgements about cultural objects. Indeed, a discussion of authenticity is always implicated in a moral, cultural authority debate. As Hall (2007, p. 1139) argues, “to accuse someone or something of being inauthentic carries with it a strong moral judgement that in many circumstances may lead to indignation”. In these reviews tourists tacitly assume that they hold cultural
authority; that they can effectively and declaratively authenticate or inauthenticate cultural objects. But such an appropriation of cultural authority is value-laden and political. Do (international) tourists, the majority of whom are expectedly unfamiliar with the relevant “native” culture, have a legitimate basis for asserting that a cultural object encountered at Victoria Falls is “hokey”, “contrived”, and so forth?

Adding to the question of legitimacy of tourists’ authenticity judgements, there are also obvious contradictions in tourists’ expressed authenticity constructions, illustrating the conflict in their cognition of what is African and what is not. For example:

The Boma is Darkest Africa with a touch of Disney..., but if you want a taste of Africa, this is the place to come. (Peregrine, American tourist, Igougo)

For this tourist, the Boma is not entirely authentic as an African experience, but it is also appropriate for a “taste of Africa”. Beyond the contradiction, the Disney analogy introduces an even more fascinating idea in relation to the authenticity debate; that of “hyperreality”. Does such an analogy threaten the “realness” of the Boma in a cultural authenticity sense, or does it become, like Disney, better than real, or more real than real –that is, “hyperreal” (Williams, 2002)? Hyperreality denotes the possibility to conceive of an “authentic fake”, or of a replica that is more real than the thing it is supposed to represent (Hughes, 1995; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999, 2000; Xie & Wall, 2002; Yang & Wall, 2009). To construe something as hyperreal is to claim that the issue of copy-versus-original is irrelevant to understanding its appeal. But this may not necessarily be what the tourist here was trying to convey. Indeed, hyperreality is an academic construct, which might be beyond the reach of most tourists’ cognition of their tourism experience.

Nevertheless, hyperreal or not, among Western tourists, the association of various eatertainment objects with a search for authentic Africanness was clear. The cuisine itself was viewed as a cultural signifier, and as tied to Zimbabwean identity and exoticness:
..., then off the BBQ (all sorts of African game and traditional grilling fare), salads and dessert. BBQ’ed warthog or pumba as it’s called, is fantastic by the way. (Steve9631, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

There is a fine line between giving tourists a taste of local culture and tackiness, and Boma manages to stay on the right side of it. (Joelestra, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

The food was traditional fare served in black cast iron pots with sadza (Hez0, white South African tourist, Tripadvisor).

The restaurant features traditional African dishes that were fun to try...The stews come with the traditional “sadza”, which is firm cornmeal-like grits, or polenta. (ATLpch, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

I passed on the deep fried worms, though my bungee jumping friends tried them and said they had a good crunch. For the faint heart there’s everything from chicken to vegetarian lasagne. (Peregrine, American tourist, Igougo)

It is confounding to note the willingness of tourists to ascribe realness or authenticity to the total experience even with clearly non-African fare in the restaurants. This further highlights the elusiveness of tourists’ perceptions. For example, the same tourists who wrote:

Much more than a meal, it is a cultural experience...This evening was an evening of total enjoyment, good friends, beautiful surroundings, great entertainment, delicious food and a new appreciation of the culture of Zimbabwe (Lindakaye, American tourist, Igougo).

interestingly, also commented:

Desserts included an incredible chocolate pudding, egg custard, and a cream cake. (Lindakaye, American tourist, Igougo).

It is legitimate to question whether and in what ways, from this tourist’s viewpoint, chocolate pudding is consistent with “the culture of Zimbabwe”. One can suggest
here that tourists can be overly generous in their ascription of authentic status. Alternatively, or as Xie (2003b) puts it, tourists can be very “superficial”. Also, they are perhaps not as sophisticated in their analyses as theoretical discussions of authenticity might suggest, with their array of complex terminologies. In short, tourists can perceive authenticity in anything and everything, even where, at face value, this does not make sense at all. Authenticity is, indeed, “in the eye of the beholder”, as Chang et al. (2008) put it so eloquently.

So far it is very clear that Western tourists’ perceptions of authenticity are blurred and fluid, as Yang & Wall (2009) assert. But, lest this oversimplifies matters, it should be pointed out that still, tourists “draw the line somewhere”, and even those who care very little about authenticity have their “lines” beyond which they would not consider the observed cultural objects to be authentic (Kelner, 2001). Some violations of the boundary between authentic and inauthentic may be acceptable, but others are not. By fluidity, Yang & Wall (2009) aptly capture both the subjectivity and pliability of this imaginary line. Tourists therefore necessarily construct authenticity simultaneously with its opposite, and without the boundary between authentic and inauthentic, at least intuitively, the concept of authenticity cannot stand (Kelner, 2001).

There are further insights that can be gleaned. First, tourist perceptions in relation to object authenticity also demonstrate, in contrast with and against the advice of MacCannell’s (1971, 1973) theory, that tourists can perceive authenticity in “front regions”. This is central to the case for constructive authenticity: authenticity can be found anywhere and in everything, as long as the mind sanctions it. Consuming food in a tourist-oriented restaurant is arguably a front stage experience; and commercial tourist restaurants are separate from the locals’ “normal” day to day lifestyles. But even in these instances; in the blatant staging of culture (thus staged authenticity), or for some, commodification of culture (Abbink, 2009; Chang, 2006; Cole, 2007; Gotham, 2002; Halewood & Hannam, 2001; MacCannell, 2001; Shepherd, 2002), tourists still perceive authenticity. Furthermore, it is inaccurate to suggest that tourists simply draw an authentic-inauthentic distinction. Clearly, tourists realise that authenticity is a relative matter, so that some establishments are not necessarily
just authentic or just inauthentic, but less authentic, or more authentic, than others. Thus even they, to their credit, seem to understand the complexity of authenticity evaluations, as in the case of the tourist who noted that the “Jungle Junction's entertainment was far more authentic” than that offered at the Boma, quoted earlier.

Additionally, there is a problem in claiming a sharp demarcation between front and back regions, as the following quote from an online review could suggest:

 Lots of locals popped in too which was a good sign of a good place to enjoy your evening. (Anonymous, victoriafalls-guide)

One can conceive of locals eating out as a fusion of front and back stages. If a restaurant is perceived by tourists as a part of the local culture (that is, a back stage), then it acquires added authentic appeal. As other scholars have pointed out, tourists are keen to experience the back region, or the true life of the “natives”, as opposed to only what is staged for their benefit, separate from the lives of the locals (Cohen, 1979, 1988, 2002; Chhabra, 2003). Thus for the relevant tourist the presence of locals “authenticated” the experience in its ability to fuse front regions with back regions, so that tourist space is not perceived only as the venue for staged authenticity (Goffman, 1959; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006)

In their totality, the differences between African and Western tourists illustrated here suggest that, as other authors have already argued (Nyiri, 2006; Ryan, 2003), authenticity is neither universally relevant as a touristic quest, nor is it universally redundant. Clearly, as online reviews demonstrate, authenticity is very much a part of the Western psyche in cultural tourism contexts. The preoccupation with evaluating authenticity demonstrated in the reviews casts doubt over postmodern theorisations of tourist experience which contend that tourists increasingly do not care about authenticity; that in fact they travel in search of inauthenticity, and even goes so far as suggesting that authenticity should no longer be referred to in relation to objects (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Olsen, 2002; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999, 2000). Whether or not tourists’ evaluations of authenticity are in fact “accurate” is not an argument for or against the postmodern
view. It is, however, a case for constructivist authenticity, which advocates the subjectivity or social construction of authenticity perceptions and experiences.

This is of course not to suggest that all tourists care about authenticity, but to emphasise that some tourists do still care, and to varying degrees. There is no denying that some tourists (not all) may recognise inauthenticity and still enjoy their experience (Xie, 2003b). This however is not the same thing as tourists seeking to experience inauthenticity. Of course, object authenticity has its limitations, such as its multiple and in some cases divergent conceptualisations. However, as Rickly-Boyd (2012) assert, the multiple conceptualisations of authenticity may be ontologically problematic, but the prominence of (object) authenticity as a term used by tourists and tourism marketers alike suggests further investigation. What I am emphasising in this study, therefore, is that claims about authenticity should not be made without due regard to the nuances brought on by different tourist groups and their concomitant frames of references. No theory of authenticity can be true about all tourists, without exception. In the next section I discuss African tourists’ criteria for evaluating eatertainment experience, which are significantly different from the authenticity quests among Western tourists.

**Aesthetics, Artistry and Entertainment Value: African Tourists’ Evaluative Criteria**

The observation that African tourists seemed to not bring authenticity quests into tourism contexts poses the question as to what criteria were important to them. In contrast to the Western tourists, whose concern was, at least partly, (object) authenticity, African tourists reflected and/or evaluated their experiences in terms of “aesthetics”, “entertainment value” (the fun element), and “artistry” of eatertainment elements. As such, when asked to describe their personal experiences in this relation, their tales were centred on how cultural showcases were presented visually and aurally; whether they looked and sounded pleasurable, creative, interesting, and innovative:

I think it’s colourful, beautiful art, the costumes and everything, the animal skins. It’s very creative. *(Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts)*
These groups are innovative, creative, they bring in new elements into the dances each time. Every year that I have been here, I see they keep spicing it up, keep it interesting. They infuse a little bit of modern sound, like a modern interpretation. There is no problem with that. *(South African tourist, Interview transcripts)*

The performers weren’t that good. Their dancing needs some work. I can dance better than some of them. They get the steps wrong. The whole thing isn’t well put together. They should get professional help about performance, about showmanship. *(Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts)*

A somewhat similar pattern of differences between local and international tourists was observed by Revilla and Dodd (2003), who studied authenticity perceptions of Talavera pottery in Puebla, Mexico. In that study, they found that local tourists were more interested in appearance and utility of the pottery, while international tourists were much more concerned about authenticity. However, the authors do not offer an explanation of these differences, or their implications, nor do they provide the cultural or ethnic background of the tourist participants. Therefore, no further comparison with the present study is possible. However the differences between Western and African tourists can be explained tentatively by arguing that the former saw the entertainment experience primarily as a cultural encounter, while for African tourists, it was viewed simply as art, because of the relatively leaner cultural distance between hosts and guests, in the latter case. As such, for African tourists, the entertainment served the basic functions of art, which often revolve around aesthetics. However, this hypothesis requires further research to verify. Further, because there were no online reviews by African tourists substantial enough to conduct a netnography on, there is a lack of symmetry of comparison between African and Western tourists, hence the tentative nature of comparisons drawn here.

It could also be suggested, from a postcolonial perspective, that because the search for authenticity is always attached to an Othering tendency, it is most accessible to Western tourists, and relatively inaccessible to African tourists. In the case of the latter, as I discuss later, to Other is against the basic African existential viewpoint,
commonly referred to as *Ubuntu*. Indeed, authenticity seeking may be seen, as one online blogger suggests in relation to Western culture, as “the stuff white people do” (http://stuffwhitepeopledo.blogspot.com.au/2010/02/seek-authenticity.html).

Moreover, the search for creativity and innovation, which implicitly approves the evolving nature of music and dance, is in direct contrast with the (Western touristic) search for object authenticity, which has the opposite effect of “museumising” culture, by requiring it not to change (Cole, 2007). As one Zimbabwean tourist pointed out:

> The groups need to keep it relevant and current, and infuse it with modern dancing, especially for the young ones, because most people bring their kids along, otherwise they, the kids, find it dull and boring. *(Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts)*

Consistent with the tenets of an African aesthetic explained in the previous chapter, the majority of African tourists also focused on the moral-educational role that eatertainment performances served, as in the case of the initiation dance presented at the Victoria Falls:

> I am happy that the young people get to learn important lessons of life when they watch this. Like the initiation dance, it teaches respect, responsibility, and so forth. *(Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts)*

The educational role has also been noted by Nicholls (1998), who observes that African dance is a mode of communication for conveying information, and therefore a major educational vehicle. Within a morally-based aesthetic, the overlap between “beauty” and “goodness” is an important one, and in this regard, as Asante (1998) notes, in many African languages, the term for good and beauty is usually the same, and that word means pleasing to the senses, virtuous, useful, correct, appropriate, and conforming to customs and expectations, and stands in sharp contrast to the word meaning vicious, useless, ill-made, or unsuitable. In Shona, for example, the word *zvakanaka* connotes all of the above, and forms the broad frame of reference for the aesthetic appeal of eatertainment among Indigenous Zimbabwean tourists.
Also, in addition to artistry and aesthetics, it was notable that African tourists viewed the cultural performance primarily in terms of its “entertainment value” (for “fun”), rather than as a showcase of traditional culture. As one tourist put it simply:

The most important thing is to be entertained. *(Tswana tourist, Interview transcripts)*

Similarly, Yang and Wall (2009) found that Chinese tourists, when experiencing staged cultural experiences, were mainly in search of enjoyment and relaxation, while Western tourists were more concerned about authenticity, and, as in this study, they were sceptical about the cultural representations they witnessed in commercial settings. Perhaps the rather simple approach to eatertainment demonstrates, for African tourists, a reluctance to see cultural representations in this context as more than just a show for a “good time”; a refusal to see the performances as a depiction of Africanness, or, in postcolonial terms, the African Other (Molz, 2007; Wood, 1997), based as this often is on stereotypes. Indeed, some African tourists were uncomfortable with, and even distanced themselves from, what they saw as a stereotypical representation of Africanness in eatertainment:

They portray us acting in ways that we no longer do. We no longer dress or live or act like this. Why should we continue to represent ourselves in a way which is no longer true, just so that tourists can have a good laugh? I don’t like to see myself continue to be portrayed like this at all. It belongs in the past, that’s where it belongs. Why do we do this to ourselves? *(Zimbabwean tourist)*

The concern expressed here resonates with what Yang (2011, p. 563) observes about ethnic groups; that, in a bid to attract more tourists, they often find themselves having to “dress the part, abandoning everyday clothes and donning costumes of the past”. Similarly, Xie and Wall (2002) write, tourists expect, based on their stereotypical views of ethnic groups, quaintly museumised aspects of ethnic cultures. To bring this back into context, at Victoria Falls, when tourists walk around the streets around town, they do not encounter anyone dressed in animal skins, but, perhaps to their disappointment, in blue jeans, khakis, shorts, and baseball caps, very
closely resembling the “Western” dress code. The problem, with this representation, of course, is that this does not fit the tourist stereotype of “Africanness”, and would therefore be thoroughly disappointing, thus the museumised representation. It is only in the context of commercial establishments aimed at the tourist market that the animal skins, for example, become a recurrent feature of local cultural representation. Thus, we can conclude, the tourism industry at Victoria Falls is complicit in the museumification of local culture, which appeals to tourists’ expectations of authentic Africanness. Taylor (2001, p. 9) expresses this quite succinctly “it is conventionally the past which is seen to hold the model of the original.”

What I am emphasising in this section, above all, is the difference in descriptive and evaluative criteria adopted by African and Western tourists, with the former not seeming to care about object authenticity. In the case of Zimbabwean tourists who chose to communicate in vernacular (Shona or English, or both), though, there are further linguistic issues, as I have highlighted already. Even if they were sensitive to notions of authenticity in some way, “authenticity” is a concept which their languages simply do not articulate, at least at the word level. It can be inferred, therefore, that African tourists have a different ontological view of the (tourism) world, in this sense, in terms of what role it serves. Of course, if they were bilingual and also spoke English, then they would have broached the subject, if it was of importance to them, in the eatertainment context. Clearly, this was also not the case. I propose therefore, based on the above differences, that for African tourists, the authenticity criterion for evaluating cultural performances is substituted by “aesthetics”, “entertainment value”, and “artistry”; with minimal association with an accurate portrayal of (historical) traditions. These three criteria, I suggest, are more meaningful and relatable for African tourists. Further, I would propose that authenticity is not in their psyche; at least not in the present context. However, given that this study was only exploratory, these suggestions can only be tentative, and much more, larger-scale research would be required to ascertain the veracity of these characterisations of African tourists. Table 5.2 summarises the emergent differences between Western and tourist behaviours and quests in the context of eatertainment.
Table 5.2: A Tentative comparison of African and Western touristic quests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>African tourists</th>
<th>Western tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ease of communicating the notion of authenticity seeking in interviews</strong></td>
<td>The lack of word equivalent for authenticity in Shona and Ndebele made it difficult to convey meanings for some tourists</td>
<td>Tourists easily understood and communicated their perceptions and quests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unguided reference to authenticity</strong></td>
<td>None of the African participants made reference to authenticity unless they were questioned about it directly</td>
<td>Most Western tourists, particularly in online reviews, referred to (a search) for object authenticity, on their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation of experience</strong></td>
<td>Majority did not evaluate experience in terms of authenticity or inauthenticity. Majority described cultural show in terms of artistry, aesthetics, and entertaiment value</td>
<td>Majority evaluated experience in relation to authenticity terms, using terms such as hokey, authentic, “Disney feel”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived primary role of cultural performance</strong></td>
<td>Entertainment/show “for fun”</td>
<td>Cultural exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efforts to uncover “deceit” in front stages</strong></td>
<td>Indifferent attitude, no particular attempts observed or reported</td>
<td>Several Western tourists attempted to detect inconsistencies in the fortuneteller’s predictions about their future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, given the limited scale of the study, the comparisons are only tentative, and subject to further investigation. As the format of this thesis is to provide a “tale of the field”, the findings are preliminary, local theory whose possible generalizability needs to be validated through more extensive testing.

5.3 Othering and Otherness: Food as the Authentic Other

The search for authenticity has been criticised for objectifying other cultures, or simply, for Othering, both of which emphasise difference from the self (“distancing”), and in the process, appropriate self-normativity (White, 2007). While anything can be Othered, I will examine Othering through the lens of food, in the
context of eatertainment. Food offers a particularly ideal framework for such an analysis, because in a restaurant context, it is the subject of significant focus, and in this case, it was also the subject of much of the tourist commentary in online reviews. However, the Othering of African food has not been the subject of research in (gastronomic) tourism studies.

Among Western tourists, the propensity to Other was revealed in the distancing of food as disgusting, scary, exotic, and unusual. In particular, and not surprisingly, the Mopani worm (Figure 5.1), served at some Victoria Falls restaurants, was the epitome of Otherness, and the large majority of tourists made a point of mentioning this unusual “delicacy”. Indeed, it was clear that for Western tourists, the worm fitted the description of Other food depicted in literature, through adjectives such as “strange”, “dangerous”, and “yucky” (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Everett, 2008; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Lin et al., 2011; Molz, 2007; Oakes, 1999; Sims, 2009; Smith & Costello, 2009):

Figure 5.1: Mopani worm: The epitome of food-related, African Otherness

Source: www.thebomarestaurant.com/gallery.html
In many instances, foods, including the Mopani worm, were described to convey disgust, expressed in terms such as “yuck”, or likening it to “dirt” and “feet”:

The meal starts and ends with disgusting experiences. First a sour milk drink that the hostess serves asking you to drink in one gulp. Yuck! Then the mopani worm which is chewy and disgusting. So the start and end are terrible. (hawk4grace, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

Get a certificate if you try the Mopani Worms, Tastes like charcoal dirt. (Fasrfred, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

Our waiter did the traditional hand washing for us, and served us a few appetizers and local, traditional beer (which tasted like feet). (Grateful_travels, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

Yup, if you can brave it, you have the chance to eat a local delicacy, mopani worms. While they’re not very tasty and look a bit like large, fat maggots, it seems to be looked upon as a manly pursuit to be able to chomp through a big juicy grub, even if it’s as appetising as eating offal. However, it is a great talking point or even ice breaker. (Raycarstairs, Scottish tourist, Igougo)

One of the “delicacies” offered was deep-fried Mopani Worms (not for the squeamish). (Lindakaye, American tourist, Igougo)

If you are really brave, you can eat a local worm delicacy and get a certificate for your achievement. Let's just say that I don't have a certificate in my possession. (Medas2005, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

A sample of the certificate the tourist is referring to in the above narrative shown below.
One tourist likened some of the meat dishes to “overcooked shoe leather”, which, very likely, is an exaggeration. Of course, the tourist is using a figure of speech, but the choice is still telling. For another tourist, in order to try some of the foods, you needed to be brave:

You can even get a certificate if you’re brave enough to try a mopane worm.

*(Joel28, German tourist, Tripadvisor)*

The majority of descriptors used by tourists in reviewing the restaurant experiences demonstrate an inclination to see the Other’s food as outside the “norm”, as other than safe, usual, or normal:

You will definitely find things that you would want to eat again, and some others that will turn your stomach. *(Vikings, white South African tourist, VirtualTourist)*
It was a great chance to try the local meat varieties and while the food itself was only ok it was a great night. *(Tom099, Australian tourist, Tripadvisor)*

The traditional beer *chibuku* was, according to one tourist, so concentrated in alcohol that it will put “the best of us out”. However, in reality (based on personal experience/background), *chibuku* is far less concentrated in alcohol that many common (that is, Western) alcoholic beverages. There is therefore among some tourists a tendency to use hyperbole in stressing difference. The insinuation is also that of the Other’s inebriety, which is a frequently encountered caricature of the “wild” Other.

*Do not forget the chibuku bear, an African brew that will put even the best of us out* *(Fisheagle, White Zimbabwean tourist, Virtualtourist)*

In their various forms, the descriptors used by tourists are very revealing of their attitudes and reactions to the food: “not for the squeamish”, “if you are really brave”; but perhaps “yuck” is the strongest one. “Yuck” ranks very high on the list of highly disapproving “slang” terms, “used to express strong disgust” *(The Free Dictionary, 2012)*. The notion of disgust has been theorised in various disciplines, including tourism *(Cushing & Markwell, 2011; Haidt, McCauley, & Rozin, 1994; Rozin, Haidt, McCauley, & Imada, 1997; Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 1999, 2008)*. Disgust, a socially acquired response or emotion *(Rozin et al., 1999)*, is defined as a type of rejection response; a desire to distance oneself from the object of disgust; a feeling of revulsion *(Harvey, Troop, Treasure, & Murphy, 2002)*. Most scholars also agree that disgust is one of the most potent ways of transmitting cultural values. In particular, it plays a major role in negative socialisation. By conveying disgust, therefore, tourists not only communicated their physical reactions, but also their cultural positioning relative to what they saw as Other.

Stereotypes, as indicated already, play an important part in the formation of perceptions, with the result of homogenising hosts. This was evident in some of the tourist reviews. For example, for one tourist, “Africans” overseason their food:
...the dinner was nice although I don’t know what it is with the Africans adding so much salt and cheese to everything!!! (Nats44, Australian tourist, Tripadvisor)

Tourist reviews clearly suggest also that food played a much broader role than just hunger satisfaction. To use Quan and Wang’s (2004, p. 301) terminology, this role went beyond “food as the extension of the ontological comfort of home”, exhibiting elements of a memorable, peak experience. For some tourists, it was a “Fear factor” challenge; a test for “manhood” (a “manly pursuit”), in which tourists who could eat the “disgusting” Mopani worm or drink the “disgusting” beer were seen as having conquered African cuisine. The certificate therefore proves or validates their bravery. For others, because of the localness of ingredients, it was an authenticator of the experience; it became a reference point for the cultural capital gained in the experience.

However, in addition to the highly critical, “distancing” or Othering comments, some of the food commentary was strongly approbative, an observation which reveals openness to experience among some tourists. In some of these cases, however, there was a hint of surprise in finding that the food was actually good:

BBQ’ed warthog or pumba as it’s called, is fantastic by the way. (Steve9631, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

The best dish is the warthog, with a dash of tiger fish and an African traditional relish over the top. (Fisheagle, White Zimbabwean tourist, VirtualTourist)

Everything we tried was delicious. The chicken cordon bleu was the best ever. Yummy. Wish I could eat there again. (Rwether, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

“Yummy” was used to describe chicken cordon bleu, which is not a Zimbabwean/African dish. Perhaps this is significant, for it may be, for this tourist, a way of asserting that even in a foreign environment and with an array of exotic, delicious foods, Western food remains “the best ever”. On the other hand, it might
be pure coincidence. Still, the urge to compare Western with Other foods was discernible. Such a comparison is problematic, as it raises the question as to whose palate takes precedence, the hosts’, or the guests’?

It is also interesting to note the diversity of attitudes towards unfamiliar food and eatertainment, reflected in different tourists’ reviews. The diversity of reactions to unfamiliar food can be analysed effectively using the neophilia-neophobia model (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hobden & Pliner, 1995; Tuorila, Lähteenmäki, Pohjalainen, & Lotti, 2001; Wilk, 2009), which refers respectively to the love for, and aversion to, unfamiliar food experiences. There were tendencies among tourists which fit most points on the continuum running from a strong liking for novel foods, to strong dislike. Thus there were adventurous neophiliacs (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009), who wanted to try everything, and encouraged others to adopt a similar, novelty-seeking attitude to food:

Be adventurous and try everything. *(Vikings, white South African tourist, Virtualtourist)*

Your offered the chance to eat an African worm during the festivities, and if you so part, a certificate is awarded. Seemed quite a lot to endure for a piece of paper, but my wife did it anyway. She’s Texan. *(Steve9631, American tourist, Tripadvisor)*

Such tourists would fit under the categories of experimental and existential gastronomic tourists, as described by Hjalager (2004). There were also neophobic tendencies (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009), exhibited by those who resisted trying anything unfamiliar or unusual. Once again, the Mopani worm was frequently the object of such food neophobia:

We weren’t brave enough to try the mopane worms. *(Skyliner, American tourist, Virtualtourist)*

Both food neophobia and neophilia have been the subject of a number of studies, in and outside tourism (for example, Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Falciglia, Couch, Gribble, Pabst, & Frank, 2000; Hobden & Pliner, 1995; Wilk, 2009).
signifying an openness to experience novelty, is arguably opposed to Othering. However, neophobia, being aversion to new foods, is strongly suggestive of an Othering mindset, and is therefore particularly relevant to the present discussion. However, the analysis of neophobia can only be complete when it is juxtaposed with its opposite, neophilia. In other words, to understand what it is, it helps also to be aware of what it is not.

Neophobia and neophilia can also be understood as representing the food risk thresholds of different tourists. Demonstrating the variability of this threshold, some tourists drew a sense of security from finding familiar or “Western” foods offered in a Zimbabwean restaurant. This was evident in references to common Western foods such as potatoes, chocolate pudding, chicken cordon bleu, cream cake, and egg custard. Of course, the label “Western food” is an oversimplification, but it is a necessary one for drawing patterns of meaning. If this label is acceptable, even only partially, then it can be suggested that while some novelty is exciting for some tourists, most also take comfort in a degree of familiarity. The following examples illustrate the comfort of familiarity, in the way popular and well known Western dishes are singled out:

For the faint heart there’s everything from chicken to vegetarian lasagne. *(Peregrine, American tourist, Igougo)*

...some unusual (wild) meats, as well as the usual fare. *(Hula2, American tourist, Tripadvisor)*

...then off to the buffet BBQ (all sorts of African game and traditional grilling fare), salads and dessert. *(Steve9631, American tourist, Tripadvisor)*

Our meal began with a small cup of traditional “beer” followed by a tray of “finger snacks” such as peanuts and cooked slices of sweet potato...The soup was “out of this world”...Desserts included an incredible chocolate pudding, egg custard, and a cream cake. *(Steve9631, American tourist, Tripadvisor)*

The analysis demonstrates overall that tourists were involved in a balancing act of “immersion without drowning” (Beckstead, 2010), by mixing familiarity with
unfamiliarity. The familiar, bearing the characteristics of “home”, provide a basis of security and orientation, so that the tourist is not overwhelmed. The unfamiliar, on the other hand, ensures that the tourist is not underwhelmed either (Beckstead, 2010).

What is also interesting to note is how the cultural producers in the case of the Mopani worm have actively portrayed themselves, offering a certificate to anyone who will eat their deep fried Mopani worm (Figure 5.2). We might have here an instance of self-exoticisation (Bunten, 2008), where Othered populations deliberately adopt an exotic, commodified persona, in order to confirm touristic stereotypes. It is legitimate to question how many Zimbabweans/Africans actually eat Mopani worm in their homes. Is the inclusion of the Mopani worm a deliberate attempt to conform to the Western stereotype of the “wild” other, by picking out and representing those facets of Indigenous culture which would make them “exotic enough” for the Western gaze? Also, to offer a certificate for a piece of food that is a delicacy in local culture is an instance of self-derogation, for such a gesture says “I would be surprised if anyone eats what we eat”, or “look at what we eat, I dare you to eat it”. The offer of a certificate is clearly symbolic, in that it communicates meanings beyond the name of the awardee and the ink used to inscribe it. It conveys a touristic milestone in the pursuit to acquire cultural capital. In Molz’s (2007) terms, it symbolises “eating difference”.

5.4 The Politics: (Object) Authentication Processes and Forms

In this section I apply Cohen and Cohen’s (2012) work to touristic experiences at Victoria Falls, providing an empirical analysis of “hot” and “cool” authentication of toured objects, within the eatertainment context. Authentication, from their perspective, refers to “a process by which something—a role, product, site, object or event—is confirmed as “original”, “genuine”, “real”, or “trustworthy” (Cohen & Cohen, 2012, p. 1296). I examine claims and contestation of authentication in relation to eatertainment objects. Expressed differently, I explore the question of cultural authorisation: who or what authorises cultural representations at Victoria Falls eatertainment, and in what ways?
As already indicated, I agree with Cohen & Cohen’s (2012, p. 1296) assertion that, while the concept of authenticity has been widely discussed in tourism studies, authentication, as a social process by which the authenticity of an attraction is confirmed, remains almost unexplored.

Cohen and Cohen (2012) also explain that authentication stretches the debate on authenticity beyond examining the nature of tourist experiences, to the more socio-political problem of the sources of authentication. The present section responds directly to their call for future research that “focuses on the nuanced social, political and cultural processes through which tourists attractions are authenticated” (Cohen & Cohen, 2012, p. 1311). Cohen and Cohen caution that, like authenticity, authentication lends itself to contestation, as the modes of authentication are inextricably connected to how tourism spaces are constructed, and in turn, to how these constructions may be contested. I illustrate some of this contestation in the context of eatertainment, voicing, for the most part, in the case of “cool” authentication, local performers.

“Cool” Authentication Claims

5.4.1.1 Elders as “Cool” Authenticators

Without exception, eatertainment group members claimed that their performance art had been authenticated by “elders” as “authentic” African/Zimbabwean music and dance. I would suggest that this is an instance of a claim of “cool authentication” (Cohen & Cohen, 2012), which refers to “typically a single, explicit, often formal or even official, performative (speech) act, by which the authenticity of an object, site, event, custom, role or person is declared to be original, genuine or real, rather than a copy, fake or spurious” (p. 1298). Thus there were many references to “original”, “authentic”, and “real”, as self-characterisations of performances in tourist restaurants. It was very clear that eatertainers’ language, in relation to what was of particular importance about the success of their art, very closely resembled the language of Western tourists, with frequent use of the term “authenticity”, and other terms within its semantic space, for example:
Yeah, authenticity is an issue which we think about. We always think about keeping everything authentic. Like, there is this song, *Ngwalu ngwalu kamatshobana*, if I tell you the background of that song, because what happened is that when I did research in Nkayi, we met this person, an elder, an expert, Kumalo who knows the history of the Ndebele. He told about that song *Ngwalu Ngwalu*, he said it was the king’s song, when he executed someone who had done wrong. He said they killed a bull, and take out the insides, and the man would be sewn into the carcass until he rotted inside there. I’m telling you, that’s what we were told. That was the history of the Ndebele when they were coming, they were very cruel in the history. When you made a mistake you died hard. *Ngwalu ngwalu* means “the clever person”. But, now, you know what I did, I took it differently and adapted it, and called it warrior dance, and created a real warrior dance, with the fight dance, and everything, with a theme, as choreography. If you watch it, you will think “these are real Ndebele”, but in fact, the dancers will be Shona!

(*Performance group leader, Boma*)

The entertainer here offers an example of the re-interpretation and reconstruction of local culture, while ascribing to the result the quality of authenticity. Still, even with the apparent ambiguity regarding the meanings of authenticity, it is interesting to note that this behaviour on the part of entertainers contrasts sharply with that of African tourists, who found it difficult to relate to the concept of authenticity, and closely resembles the sensibilities evident in Western tourists. Such an observation is perplexing, in that individuals from a relatively similar cultural background (African tourists and entertainers) demonstrated a sharp contrast in their sensitivities in relation to cultural entertainments. The majority of entertainers had limited English vocabulary, yet they used terms such as “authentic”, “fake”, and “original”, with no difficulty. However, when probed on why they were sensitive to authenticity, and why it was necessary to have their art “authenticated”, as they claimed it had been, the performers gave both cultural and business reasons for the importance of “authentic” cultural representations on their part:
Tourists can tell if you are fake or if you authentic. Many of them do a lot of research before they arrive. They know about our traditions. I once witnessed an embarrassing situation when this guy who works at a gallery gave incorrect information about sculptures. He said the stone sculpture was Ndebele. The tourist corrected him right there and there, told him, no buddy, it’s Shona. I have been to galleries which exhibit Shona sculpture. The guy was humiliated. They read books about our culture. You can’t fool them. *(Performance group leader, Boma)*

An alternative way of explaining the observation is to suggest that the sensitivity to authenticity among eatertainers is simply a business response, in view of the majority touristic quests. Alternatively, it may be attributed to acculturation, that is, through their constant interaction with tourists (who, as I indicated earlier, happen to be predominantly Western), eatertainers have imbibed the Western sensibility of authenticity, whether or not the two groups have a similar conception of what it means. In other words, eatertainers’ views on the importance of authenticity could have been acquired in the course of duty.

Acculturation, in its many forms, has been studied by many scholars, within tourism and beyond (for example, Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002; Edwards, Fehring, Jarrett, & Haglund, 2008; Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Grünwald, 2002; Ng, 2007; Rudmin, 2010; Seo, Phillips, Jang, & Kim, 2012; Yang, 2011). It has been defined as those phenomena that result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent alteration in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (Funk & Bruun, 2007). Rudmin (2010) defines it similarly as cultural learning and adjustment in the context of continuous cross-cultural experience. Tourism provides ideal, although short-lived, opportunities for tourists and guests, as well as tourists from different cultural backgrounds, to come into contact with one another (Besculides et al., 2002; Edwards et al., 2008; Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Grünwald, 2002).
Acculturation can manifest in many ways, including changes in language and styles of communication, behaviours, values, and attitudes. In the case of entertainers, what I am suggesting, albeit very tentatively, is that constant interaction with Western tourists, with their frequent reference to authenticity, could have engendered an acceptance of this Western sensibility, thus the consistent claims of “cool” authentication. The impact of acculturation could also apply to the owners of the establishments and their employees, although these groups fall beyond the scope of the present study. Of course, changes in the host culture do not always imply an acculturating process, as a pragmatic cultural production work in response to touristic demands to create viable economic alternatives and livelihoods is often needed (Grünewald, 2002), as I already stated.

5.4.1.2 Supernatural authentication

In some cases, claimed authentication was supernatural, hence the subheading (my term):

So when we have the project, we take it to Nkayi, then we meet the chief. We fund it. We take all the spiritual mediums, we have a big (?), we buy a cow, exactly how they do in ceremonies. We ask the chief, “okay, we want to know how the ceremony is done. When its rainmaking, how is it done? Then, how long does it take?” So I have all that detail, then I understand, ok, that’s how it’s done. Now it’s up to me to create. Now we ask the spiritual when they come. So we interview the spirit. It was really fun and difficult. Then, you have to interview the spiritual, and they tell you, every background, and they are so angry with the situation, what is happening. And you find that all the, every spirit which comes, has got the same problems, same problem. Then you say, ok, then that means that the people who are now living, they are failing to follow the culture and the structure.

(*Performance group leader, Boma*)

Attaching supernatural processes (authentication by ancestral spirits via spirit mediums) as evidence of originality and sacredness of cultural representation takes authentication to another level. It is a “sublime” form of authentication, as it
transcends the secular or profane world. It is a valuable form of authentication, because, in part, tourists would lack resources to dispute such a claim. Also, the mystical or spiritual associations evoked by claimed engagement with “spirit mediums” interact positively with some portrayals of African culture, and in particular, its engagement with the spiritual world. From a business perspective, it is not important whether these claims are valid or not, rather, it matters whether tourists believe them or not, if and when they (tourists) become aware of the claims, through means such as website advertising, for instance. In the present study, tourists did not display awareness of these claims of authentication.

5.4.1.3 “Textbook Authentication”

In another scenario, an eatertainment group leader referred to an interesting version of “cool” authentication, wherein he claimed that his knowledge, which he shared with tourists as part of “edu-tainment” in eatertainment, was sourced from an authoritative book on African cultural traditions:

Since I am very much interested in this stuff, I dig more information, I do more research. I got this book from a white lady, the GM’s wife. She saw me doing this, then she presented this to me. Then she told me that where did you learn this, then I told her just through reading books and papers I come across. Then she said what you are talking it’s like you have read this book, then you can have this book and go and see it. (Performance group leader, Jungle Junction)

[Note: The book in question is entitled “Ceremony! Celebrating Zambia’s Cultural Heritage”, authored by Tamara Guhrs (2006)].

Thus for him, that he had taken some of the information he narrated for tourists’ benefit from a textbook that authenticated the representation of culture. This observation becomes even more interesting when one considers that the book was authored by a Western researcher (and therefore “cultural outsider”) “Tamara Guhrs”. Clearly, the agency of representation is not straightforward; it is located in a complex web of relationships between different actors in the creation of knowledge.
Overall, however, and consistent with what Cohen and Cohen (2012) noted, there were very few instances of “coolly” authenticated objects, or claims of such. Therefore, it may be argued, that tourists generally have more access to “hot” than “cool” authenticity, and, by implication, there was a lower chance of experiencing objective authenticity, compared to non-objective forms of authenticity, such as constructive authenticity, and existential or experiential authenticity, performative authenticity, emergent authenticity, and symbolic authenticity (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Lau; Olsen, 2002; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999).

5.4.1.4 Tourist search for coolly authenticated objects

As I already suggested, the “cool” authentication claims above are arguably, at least in part, a response to perceived object authenticity quests among tourists. To claim authentication is to suggest objects so authenticated meet tourist expectations in some way. Tourists’ search for “coolly” authenticated objects represents an explicit desire to experience objective authenticity, as Cohen and Cohen (2012) argue. However, the majority sentiment in tourism is that the search for objective authenticity, predicated on the existence of “originals”, is a case of ever-receding horizons; even “coolly” authenticated objects are not necessarily an “original”; indeed in some cases, there is simply no original to refer to. “Cooly” authenticated objects’ only claim to authenticity lies in their having been “authorised” by the authenticating authority (Schouten, 2006). Thus the authenticity of “coolly” authenticated objects is still a contestable, subjective reality.

The implication here is that no authentication, “cool” or otherwise, is complete; it is always subject to contestation. This leads to the question as to whether “cool” authentication is of any consequence. Part of the answer to this question lies in Cohen and Cohen’s observation that the validity or consequence of “cool” authentication is dependent on the credibility of the authenticator, who is supposed to be an “expert”. “Cool” authentication therefore imposes the “museum-related” view of authenticity onto toured objects (Wang, 1999; 2000). Also, taking into account the suggested close association between “cool” authentication” and object
authenticity, the former is likely to be subject to the same criticisms as those levelled against the latter. For example, there may be no objective basis for establishing the expertness of an “expert”, so that “objective” authentication, like objective authenticity, is deemed unrealisable.

However, apart from the elusiveness of objective authenticity, even in the case of “coolly” authenticated objects, it is also important to note that the explicit search for “coolly” authenticated objects refutes suggestions that object-related authenticity has lost its relevance to touristic quests, in light of the claimed postmodern era by some scholars. There is a basis for claiming that object authenticity (in addition to existential authenticity), should remain firmly entrenched in studies of touristic experience; it should not be condemned to a premature demise. Both “cool authentication”, and object-related authenticity, therefore, are still a part of, at least, some tourists’ quests within their touristic experiences. Whether or not tourists succeed in their quests is another question altogether, answers to which do not render object authenticity redundant or otherwise.

On a theoretical level, there is a further difficulty, as so far, apart from Cohen and Cohen’s (2012) work, there has been a dearth of theory on authentication forms and processes. However, the “cool” authentication of souvenirs has been the subject of some research (albeit limited), in tourism (Schouten, 2006; Shenhav-Keller, 1993), although the political issues have been treated rather superficially. What existing research had failed to do, (and which gap Cohen and Cohen partially address), was to explicitly demarcate “cool” authentication from “hot” authentication, so that authentication as a broad construct could be unpacked with more precision.

It is also worthwhile considering why the rate of “cool” authentication for tourism attractions is low, in other words, why instances of cool authentication are few. A possible explanation could be the realisation by tourism suppliers, especially where intangible culture is concerned, that “cool authentication” is perpetually undermined by “hot” authentication, which continually contests opinions about the authenticity of objects, in the process further authenticating and even “deauthenticating” them. Where authenticity and authentication of toured objects are continually confirmed
and contested by tourism consumers themselves, some responsibility for the status of these objects is partly ceded from suppliers to the market, a dynamic which can be favourable for the former. In addition, in the case of overtly staged or “fake” attractions, suppliers might fail to seek “cool” authentication for moral or ethical reasons. Moreover, some forms of “cool” authentication can carry significant financial cost. For example, accreditation bodies often charge a substantial fee to certify suppliers as meeting identified criteria for “authentic” status.

Arguably, tourism suppliers also recognise that not all tourists are naive, and will therefore not accept any authentication, in whatever form, prima facie. “Cool” or not, they will want to confront authentication claims and verify them, if they have the required resources. Further, for suppliers, it could be argued that “cool” authentication is generally less favourable in some instances than “hot” authentication because it, that is, “cool authentication”, needs to be defended and proven in a plausibly “objective” manner. The process of authentication itself needs to be authenticated, in a never-ending process. This leads directly to the destabilisation of the very premise of “cool” authentication, although I am not suggesting that in theory, as concepts, “cool” authentication and “hot” authenticity cannot be drawn. It appeals to reason, and on a theoretical level, it is conceivable. However, when it is translated to practice, it becomes problematic, as the authenticator must be “coolly” authenticated to start with, and so should the “authenticator” of the “authenticator”. “Cool” authenticity, as an attribute attached to a toured object, therefore, is, at best, a moving target.

“Hot” Authentication

“Hot” authentication, according to Cohen and Cohen (2012, p.1300), “is an immanent, reiterative, informal performative process of creating, preserving and reinforcing an object’s, site’s or event’s authenticity. It is also typically an anonymous course of action, lacking a well-recognised authenticating agent.” Cohen and Cohen add that the process of “hot” authentication is largely immune to external criticism because it is based on belief rather than proof. Examples of “hot” authentication were more widely present in tourist’ online reviews, than those
relating to “cool” authentication. Indeed, the reviews, in themselves, by representing subjective evaluations of the authenticity or otherwise of toured objects, are part of the “hot” authentication process of toured objects. They are a form of the “reiterative, informal performative process”, which defines “hot” authentication for Cohen and Cohen. By participating in the contestation, confirmation, creation and reinforcement of objects’ authenticity status, tourists share in the political power that immanently and perpetually invalidates and validates attractions.

What is also significant to note is that just as objects can be “hotly” authenticated, they can oppositely be “hotly” deauthenticated, by declarative or performative acts, so that what has been “hotly” authenticated by one observer can similarly be “hotly” deauthenticated by another. Thus, for example, and as referenced earlier, some reviewers dismissed the Boma show as “loud” and “inauthentic”.

Deauthentication (“hot” or “cool”) has, however be rarely highlighted, or even mentioned, as Cohen and Cohen observe. The parallel of this is true in the case of authenticity, that is, its opposite, or negation of authenticity, “inauthenticity”, has seldom been the focus of research, except in the existential sense. In practice, deauthentication is also less common than authentication, either “cool” or “hot”. This point however needs to be substantiated in future research. At the same time, this is to be expected, I would suggest, given that deauthentication is more extreme in its consequences than authentication. It carries serious moral connotations, and often requires bold, subversive acts, which are likely to be inflammatory and offensive to some parties (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). In the case of “cool” deauthentication, where an expert, or some other authority, through a declarative act, deauthenticates an object, not only the status of the object is affected, but also, the social standing of all who venerated it as authentic, is almost certainly offended.

“Hot” deauthentication, being an “immanent, reiterative, informal performative process”, is, arguably, less severe, and therefore, likely to be more commonly encountered or performed, than its “cool” counterpart. The potential socio-ethical consequences for the “hot” deauthenticator, are also likely to be less pronounced, compared to a “cool” deauthenticator. This possible impunity explains why tourists
will complain blatantly on Tripadvisor, for example, that specific attractions or elements within them were inauthentic. Of course, just as authentication can be dismissed, deauthentication can also be discredited. However, I would argue that it is more difficult to undo the impacts of deauthentication, than those of authentication, especially in the case of “cool” deauthentication. “Hot” deauthentication can be conceived of as inconsequential, as the “hot” authentication of toured objects is, by definition, continually contested anyway. Ultimately, no single declarative act of authentication or deauthentication overrides all others. Thus for any particular toured object, perceptions about “hot” authentication are the ever-evolving result of the sum of the numerous individual acts and contestations. In addition, what can be further noted is the emergent and constructive nature of “hot” authentication, which Cohen & Cohen emphasise, proceeding from the subjectivity of authenticity perceptions, brought to the fore in Cohen’s (1979, 1988, 1993) earlier work. Clearly, the realm of both authenticity and authentication is one of subjective and multiple realities.

The importance of performative acts has been highlighted in several studies on tourist experience, broadening the tourist’s role beyond that of the widely contested “gaze” (Edensor, 2000, 2001; Everett, 2008; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Law, Bunnell, & Ong, 2007; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Urry, 1990). It captures how tourists’ active participation in comporting themselves in respect of toured objects carries the agency for constructing and reconstructing the images held about the same. This agency of tourists should, however, not be overstated, as other stakeholders (locals, governments, and entrepreneurs), also hold significant authority, drawn from various sources of power. Therefore, “hot” authentication is best articulated in terms of potentially conflicting forces, each seeking precedence over the other. Table 5.3 summarises the dimensions of authentication in the context of eatertainment experiences at Victoria Falls.
Table 5.3: Dimensions of authentication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Elements/Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Cool” authentication</td>
<td>Elders as experts, Supernatural authentication, “Text book” authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hot” authentication</td>
<td>Homage to ancestors during performances; Contestation in tourist reviews (authenticity/inauthenticity perceptions)</td>
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5.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discussed the contestation of object authenticity in Victoria Falls tourist eatertainment experiences, voicing African tourists alongside Western tourists. I provided a tentative comparison of African tourists and Western tourists, highlighting the emergent differences in their quests. African tourists had difficulty relating with the notion of authenticity, and were more likely to evaluate the eatertainment experience in terms of its artistry, aesthetics, and entertainment value. As such, African tourist commentary on cultural performances centred on how performers looked, sounded, dressed, and danced, as artists, rather than on the object authenticity of cultural objects in eatertainment. This has important implications for cultural tourism suppliers who cater to a predominantly African tourist market. It implies that for business success, marketing messages would need to emphasise the aesthetics, fun, and artistic aspects of cultural showcases, rather than “authenticity”.

However, it is important to emphasise here the limited scale of the study, which means that the conclusions reached on the characteristics of both African and Western touristic quests are subject to further, more extensive study. At this point, the comparison is a “tale of the field’, rather than a declaration of facts about
African and Western tourists. Further, another limitation arises with the the lack of netnographic data pertaining to African tourists, indicating asymmetry of comparison. Nonetheless, for an exploratory study on African tourists, the data were sufficient to warrant a preliminary comparison that could serve as a basis for future, more extensive study.

I noted that Western tourists, particularly in their online reviews, where they recounted and reflected on their eatertainment experiences, frequently referred to authenticity and inauthenticity, in the object-related sense of the term. The majority of them expressed concerns of the eatertainment shows being fake, contrived, and “hokey”. The differences observed between Western and African tourists call into question the validity of non-context-specific claims about the search for (object) authenticity in tourism, while building the case for (socio-culturally) situated theory, and for the application of more existentialist theoretical frameworks in authenticity studies.

While acknowledging the limitations of object authenticity, I also demonstrated that postmodern theory dismisses authenticity prematurely, as online reviews demonstrate that the sensibility remains firmly embedded in the Western tourist psyche. Thus even studies of authenticity perceptions are still relevant to understanding Western tourist quests. What might be too restrictive is the adoption of objectivist orientations which assume that authenticity can be measured objectively. Nonetheless, authenticity remains an elusive concept, especially in its constructive form. Tourists project their beliefs about the notion onto toured cultural objects in an unpredictable, fluid fashion. Therefore, constructive authenticity, which accommodates the subjectivity of opinion, perfectly encapsulates the malleability of tourist perceptions about cultural representations in tourism. As such “Zimbabweanness” and “Africanness” were mutable constructs; and whatever they are, they are not a fixed reality “out there”. They do not exist independently of the subject’s mind.

The chapter demonstrated how the construction of authenticity is a socially contingent phenomenon ((Kim & Jamal, 2007), where tourists are actors in a social
process that elevates cultural eatertainment objects to authentic status, or relegates them to inauthentic status. The construction of authenticity is a conflicted, contradictory, and non-linear process: tourists move back and forth from cultural objects and their beliefs, and hold stereotypes or idealised conceptions, imagination, and background, to assign authenticity or inauthenticity attributes to a cultural object or experience. In the process they validate, educate, miseducate, contradict and interrogate themselves. They question the addition to their cultural capital made by the cultural immersion. They are cynical yet generous with their evaluation of cultural authenticity, thus “Darkest Africa with a touch of Disney” and in the same statement “a taste of Africa”.

I also discussed the different forms and processes of authentication relevant to eatertainment experiences. In the process, I responded to Cohen & Cohen’s (2012) call for substantiation of their “hot” and “cool” authentication propositions. In doing this, I strove to look beyond authenticity perceptions, questioning the equally important underlying political issues of authorisation. It was particularly interesting to note the claims of “cool” authentication by eatertainment group members, which reflect their awareness of the Western touristic quests.

I also examined, through the lens of food, Western touristic Othering—a tendency to distance the African Other’s food as disgusting, yucky, for the brave, and not for the squeamish. This propensity to Other reflects the broader discourse of hegemonic appropriation of normativity by the West, which has been discussed extensively in postcolonial theory. I therefore made a contribution to the growing trend in tourism studies’ embrace of critical approaches to the study of tourist experience. However, as the discussion highlighted, Othering is complex, as the Othered may be implicated, when they encourage the consumption of difference by marketing and presenting their culture in conformity with commonly held stereotypes about themselves. Thus in the Othering of food there is no “victim” and “accused”, but rather, a series of socially constructed roles performed, confirmed, contested, and contradicted perpetually, between and among hosts and guests. Notably, the lens of food was particularly efficient for exploring Western tourists’ neophobic reactions to
what is marketed to them as local food. Eating food became an exercise in consuming difference.

While the study disrupts the universalist relevance of object-related authenticity (Wang, 1999, 2000), the usefulness of existential authenticity, regardless of tourists’ cultural background, remains intact. Being independent of the authenticity of toured objects (in the present study, the performance show), existential authenticity is accessible to tourists in their personal capacity, in terms of their conception of their “true self”. Thus both African and Western tourists could be on par when they are freed from the limitations of object authenticity. It is therefore arguable that existential authenticity is a more universal concept, and can serve as a useful theoretical framework for broad studies of touristic experience, without the need to impose the positivist assumptions of object authenticity. With this in mind, in the next chapter I look beyond objects, and examine the experience of existential authenticity, which is independent from the authenticity or inauthenticity of toured cultural objects.
6. BEYOND OBJECTS: EXPERIENCING EXISTENTIAL AUTHENTICITY

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the experience of existential authenticity in eatertainment. I focus on how tourism experiences are enacted as rituals for escaping obligatory, everyday tasks, becoming spaces for play and self-actualisation, relatively free from the strain of disciplinary gazes of normal life. Specifically, I demonstrate how communitas and liminality are evident in eatertainment experience, and how eatertainers make use of liminal space to create a euphoric and embodied experience for guests. I also analyse the role of three African relational value systems, *Ubuntu*, *Hlonipha*, and *Isithunzi*, on Indigenous African tourists’ experiences of interpersonal and intrapersonal authenticity.

6.2 Interpersonal Authenticity

_Liminality And Communitas In Eatertainment_

The tourism industry at Victoria Falls, in the way that it organises and differentiates touristic space, can be described as involved in a process of “encapsulation”. Encapsulation refers to the process of establishing a liminal setting, or demarcating the ordinary from the extraordinary, and ensuring that people are fully immersed and participating in these symbolic spaces and places (Beckstead, 2010; Jansson, 2007). Consistent with what I observed in all five restaurants, as I will demonstrate with examples below, Johansson (2007) argues that touristic textures are orchestrated by the tourism industry to encapsulate an experience of liminality. Efforts to encapsulate tourists in a liminal or extraordinary world were discernible particularly in the form of the “theming” around Zimbabwean/African culture. Theming is the
most elaborate form of encapsulation (Jansson, 2007), as everything about the design of the relevant commercial establishment revolves around a particular symbolic denominator. This symbolic denominator becomes the means by which tourists’ attention is encapsulated.

The creation and maintenance of the extraordinary in tourism space is possible through various social actors that include social institutions, the sacralisation of place through myths, aura, objects, photography of exoticness, and guidebooks (Beckstead, 2010; Jansson, 2007). In response, tourists embrace this encapsulation through their performative behaviours of photo-taking, and purchasing souvenirs (Beckstead, 2010). The opposite of encapsulation, decapsulation, entails a process of de-differentiating the ordinary and the extraordinary. This can occur in various forms, including aspects of home being introduced into the extraordinary zone, blurring and even eliminating the boundaries between the liminal and the mundance or profane (Beckstead, 2010).

The following quote from my fieldnotes illustrates how eatertainers are part of the encapsulation project:

White, black, brown people dance in the same space, ululating, clapping, singing, falling to the ground, and getting up. It is a clear liminal space, and all seems forgotten in the fun. Some hug and shake hands. Some laugh, others scream with sheer joy. *(Fieldnotes, November 2011)*

It is clear from these observations that eatertainers actively create a space in which tourists are temporarily encouraged to let go of everyday constraints and restraints, and, as a result, to experience a liberating liminal experience. The embrace of liminality and resultant communitas (Collins, 2005; Lett, 1983; Nash & Smith, 1991; Nichols, 1985; Turner & Bruner, 1986; Turner & Schechner, 1988), was also evident. Liminality and communitas offer a useful lens for examining tourist experiences because they are located in a place and time outside of everyday, home routines. As such, they bear the quality of “betwixt and between”, which, makes them (tourist experiences) liminal, and participating tourists, liminars (Amit, 2010; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000; Dalwai & Donegan, 2012; Daniel, 1996; De
Liminality offers a world of opportunity in which anything might, or even should, happen (Turner, 1979). Tourist behaviours in liminality are not controlled by the conventional clock, and time and place acquire spontaneity, so that in eatertainment space, tourists dance into the late hours of the night, without having to worry much about the next day, for instance. They have the opportunity to live in a moment in which nothing else seems to matter. Time itself becomes liminal, as does the identity of the tourists participating in eatertainment space (Turner, 1979). In particular, the relaxation of normal rules of behaviour in everyday life was evident in various euphoric behaviours:

Guests acquire a childlike air about them. The way they jump up and down, laugh, scream, ululate, whistle, clap, grin, stare, squeal, and giggle as they didn’t have a care in the world. Racial, ethnic, age, gender, nationality, cultural, religious, political and other social divides seem to be forgotten. Black hugs white, and vice versa. White dances with Asian. Some spontaneously hold hands. It doesn’t seem to matter if the hand held belongs to a total stranger. Certainly, the “high” is such that inhibitions are lost. Maybe the alcohol helps for some. (Fieldnotes, October 2011)

The relaxation of rules occurs because in liminal space, liminars exist as “being-on-a-threshold”, and individual status falls outside that determined by social structure (Cary, 2004; Nordin & Holmsten, 2009; Pungas & Võsu, 2012; Ryan & Kinder, 1996; Smith & Riley, 2011; Thomassen, 2012; Turner, 1967, 1982, 1987; 1995; Turner & Turner, 2011; Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005). The freedom to laugh and dance with strangers highlighted in the description above, for example, might be socially inappropriate in everyday space, but was clearly acceptable in eatertainment’s liminal zone.

Liminality is typically accompanied by a feeling of communitas (Cohen, 1985, 2010; Coleman, 2002; Folmar, 2009; Jansson, 2007; Klapcsik, 2011; Lee, 2010). Communitas is nevertheless a hybrid concept: three kinds have been identified, namely, existential or spontaneous communitas, normative communitas, and
ideological communitas (Turner, 1969, 1972, 1974, 1979, 1980). In the context of eatertainment, it is spontaneous communitas—the direct and immediate homogenisation of status (a deeply personal phenomenon), as the term suggests, which is most relevant (de Freitas, 1998). It is this form of communitas which can be captured in the fleeting emotional episode of eatertainment. The other forms of communitas arise in more sustained interpersonal relationships, which fall beyond the scope of the shortlived and transitional euphoria of eatertainment dance floors, or even the broader eatertainment experience.

The levelling or stripping of social status, or antistructure, characteristic of “communitas” (Dalwai & Donegan, 2012; Juschka & Kempe, 2003), was expressed in various forms. The first glaring example of the creation and experience of liminality and communitas was the acceptance of the dress code at the Boma, as shown in Figure 6.1, which creates a symbolic “sameness”, or antistructure. Thus liminality could be expressed symbolically, where the uniformity of tourists’ outward dress became representative of the uniformity of status. The free dress code, uniform for guests of all races, cultural backrounds, and ages, provided at the entrance to the restaurant, could be seen as signifying entering a new status-free world.

Secondly, communitas was manifested in the cross-cultural participation in dance, which in some cases involved the spontaneous formation of dancing couples between total strangers. The spirit of comradeship and homogeneity, as Ryan & Kinder (1996) characterise communitas, was apparent in the childlike giggling, holding hands, and dancing in a circle formation reminiscent of child play in kindergarten. These expressions created a sacred, egalitarian ambience of undifferentiated wholeness, which are the mark of antistructure (Juschka & Kempe, 2003; Nash & Smith, 1991). Liminality explains this new levelled-status identity in terms of people confronting each other on the grounds of a generic human bond (Cohen, 1985; Turner, 1974). The dissolution of marginal and dominant statuses is quite significant in the present context, as Zimbabwe represents a postcolonial space, proceeding from a history of Western dominance over the African Other. It is the latter who occupied a marginal, or alterity status. Thus in tourist eatertainment
spaces, formerly dominant Westerners and otherwise subaltern Others became equals, at least in that moment of “liminality-communitas”.

Figure 6.1: Homogenised status? Liminals in action

*Source: www.thebomarestaurant.com/gallery.html*

However, the liberation from social structure, or communitas, was shortlived (Turner, 1969), as the end of the show brought the liminals back to normality, signalling what Jansson (2007) calls decapsulation: a return to the “real world”. The extraordinary, contained in the atmosphere of liminality and communitas soon gave way to the ordinary, with its associated structure, norms, and social judgement, signalled by the looks of embarrassment on some (now former) liminals’ faces:

After the show, and the excitement fades, there is a certain level of discomfort among some guests when they reflect on what they have just done. One night, after the dancing, a guest expressed her embarrassment over her behaviour during the euphoria of the drumming party: “Oh my God! My boyfriend was watching me making a fool of myself”. When the sound of the drum dies down, guests walk back to their tables awkwardly, back in the real world, where they have to try to locate their handbags, settle the bill, and
figure out if their transport for the night is booked. At this stage there are no more photos to be taken. They have already captured the moments they want to remember. (*Fieldnotes, October 2011*)

In the experience of existential authenticity in liminality, as illustrated, tourist space became an occasion for self-actualization, offering the possibility of freedom and escape from everyday norms and disciplinary gazes (Light, 2009, Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005). There was, nonetheless, a challenge in trying to discern whether tourist behaviours differed from how they would otherwise be within their home routines. I was not in a position to discern, just by watching tourist behaviours, whether or not their actions were inversionary (that is, opposite to, or significantly different from, their home behaviours). Some tourists, however, confirmed that they viewed eatertainment experiences as opportunities for experimenting with an alternative self, suggesting the likelihood of inversionary behaviours:

> I felt freer, and more relaxed. I could let go, let my guard down, let my hair down, and just have a good time. I could cease to worry about everything else and just let the child in me come out. Life is too short to be too serious, you have to be silly sometimes, dance like nobody is watching, even though you could be making a fool of yourself. In this environment, people don’t care really, they really let go. (*American tourist, Fieldnotes, November 2011*)

> It was ecstatic. I was in another cloud. I had a lot of fun, oh my! African drums are hypnotic, powerful. The drumming guys are great. Nothing short of ecstatic. (*Zimbabwean tourist, Fieldnotes, November 2011*)

The feeling of ecstasy described here is a strong indicator of the liminal world that was the eatertainment dance floor. However, there is also obviously a problem in isolating eatertainment space as the region of liminality within the broader touristic (restaurant) experience, because all of tourism can be viewed as a liminal experience. All tourism, to some extent, represents a temporally limited, socially tolerated episode of wish fulfilment and fantasy enactment, all of which are normally denied people (Ryan & Kinder, 1996). What I am suggesting here is that eatertainment is an *intensely* liminal space, within what is already a liminal zone,
spatially and temporally. Therefore, I would add that liminality can be seen as gradated, with some spatial-temporal zones being more liminal, or less liminal than others. Further, there is no absolute liminality (or absolute unliminality), but only relative liminality. It therefore makes sense to suggest that there are many thresholds of limens, which demarcate the liminal from the profane in touristic eatertainment. The threshold itself is also flexible, as individual tourists negotiate their own realities about what is ordinary and what is extraordinary. In other words, as Thomassen (2012) asserts, the boundary between ordinary and extraordinary is not simply there, it is to be confronted. In effect, liminality is related both to limits and to the breach of limits (Klapcsik, 2012).

It is significant that eatertainment space is an ideal framework for analysing the practical uses of the encapsulation-decapsulation dialectic, proposed by Jansson (2007). That tourists became encapsulated, and then subsequently decapsulated, is not incidental or accidental. It is clearly a scheduled progression within the designs of the hotel industry at Victoria Falls. Tourists seem to realise this, and more importantly, they seem happy to play along with it. After all, they travelled from their homes to be encapsulated by a world of fantasy and play. Indeed, they would be disappointed if there was no facility to allow them to move away from the world of ordinary into a zone of the extraordinary. Throughout their period of encapsulation, they always confront the risk, as Jansson (2007) points out, of breaking the magic spell, thus their eager efforts to immerse themselves in the fun and “let go”, as I attempted to depict in the above observations of eatertainment scenes.

Liminality demonstrates the potency of tourism in creating an atmosphere that transcends everyday social restrictions (Sharpley & Jepson, 2011). However, not all tourists undergo a liminal experience (Nash & Smith, 1991). Indeed, there were many tourists who seemed distant from liminality and its accompanying communitas, choosing instead to watch the show from their tables, seemingly nonchalantly. This could be due to any number of reasons, such as a disposition that is risk averse and less open to new experience. However, more research would be required to explore this observation further.
Interpersonal authenticity: Family ties (significant others)

The majority of tourists, in reflecting on their eatertainment experiences, referred to the importance of family ties, the emotional bonds of which for Wang (1999, 2000), are a conduit for the experience of interpersonal authenticity. Interpersonal authenticity centres on the collective/social experience of authenticity. Thus tourists referred to “relevant others”, and to “everyone”, and frequently used “first person plural” when describing their eatertainment experience:

Good for a group or family. (Sanfranciscobritgirl, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

...where everyone gets to beat along with the drumming group... (Steve9631, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

Definitely a cool experience. We went as a large group at the end of our Kumuka tour. (Tom099, Australian tourist, Tripadvisor)

The interpersonal, relational self, therefore, became an important aspect of the experience. However, as I have already highlighted, the idea of the self, interpersonal or otherwise, is a multifaceted, rather than a single, monolithic entity (Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006). In the context of interpersonal authenticity, it is the relational aspects of the self which are of particular interest. In the tourist narratives above, the importance of this social self in relation to family and significant others is evident: “good for a group or family”; “we ate here”; and “where everyone gets to beat along”. In this connection, numerous theoretical concepts have been developed, including the public self, interpersonal self, social self, interdependent self-construal, and relational-interdependent self-construal (Chen et al., 2006).

Of course, and as already discussed, interpersonal authenticity is broader in scope than family interaction, as it extends to other participants in tourism spaces who might be encountered fleetingly, such as other tourists or tourism employees. According to Wang (1999, p. 364) however, family ties are some of the most
authentic relationships; and in recreational tourism, “one not only gains pleasant experiences from seeing sights, events, or performances, but also simultaneously experiences intensely authentic, natural and emotional bonds, and a real intimacy in the family relationship”. The tourist narratives above indicate that eatertainment space then became an opportunity to experience and strengthen these authentic relationships.

The experience of interpersonal authenticity is nonetheless not a guaranteed one, even in the case of family ties. Tourists must actively labour to create, negotiate, and validate their relational identity. As Davis (2012) argues, for all social actors in interpersonal situations, the social construction of self and identity is highly labourious, as individuals work to have their identity meanings verified by others. However, he adds, this identity work must remain unacknowledged, if they are to be (perceived as) authentic. In other words, individuals interacting with others need to act with spontaneity, which I have already explained to be an important marker of authenticity, in Wang’s (1999, 2000) terms. For Davis (2012, p. 1967), an authentic self is a self that “appears to simply be, rather than a self that is accomplished”. Tourists therefore face the constant challenge of wanting to be true to themselves in relationship with others, but without appearing to these others as though they are overly conscious of it or orchestrating it, because, “to expose the laborious nature of a self is to threaten the authenticity of the social or interpersonal actor” (Davis, 2012, p. 1967).

### 6.3 The Role of Ubuntu, Hlonipha and Isithunzi

As many authors have suggested, notwithstanding some local variations, there are important and basic features of African worldviews, making it legitimate to speak of an African understanding of Being (existence), including interpersonal relations, in singular (Behrens, 2010, 2012; Bell & Metz, 2011; Coder, 2008; Giddy, 2012; Grainger, Mills, & Sibanda, 2010; Mangena & Chitando, 2011; Murove, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009b; Murove & Mazibuko, 2008; Prozesky, 2009; Shutte, 2009). As a result, for example, it is common for scholars to refer to the collective nature of African society and self concept, generally, in contrast to the individualistic nature of the West (Anchimbe, 2011; de Kadt, 1998; Van Heerden, 2002). Of course, these generalisations will not hold true for every individual. However, they provide a broad framework for understanding human behaviours, with culture and tradition as mediating factors.

As elaborated by Giddy (2012), these African worldviews offer ideas about the status of being a person (Being), both on a factual level (a person grows through others), and on a normative one (it is good to foster particular relational or interpersonal attitudes and carry out acts which promote the sharing of one’s life with others). As the majority of scholars in this area tend to do, I adopt the Zulu/Ndebele translations, which seem to be the most acceptable and most widely understood forms. Because the worldviews undergird the patterns of life and human relationships, however ephemeral, in (traditional) African societies (Ncayiyana, 2007; Prabhakaran, 1998; Prozesky, 2009; Rudwick & Shange, 2006, 2009; Vailati, 2012; Van Heerden, 2002;), Ubuntu, Hlonipha, and Isithunzi can be understood as representing African tourists’ “throwsness” or “facticity” (circumstances and traditions we found ourselves in, beyond our own making), whether or not they uphold them (Heidegger, 1962, 1996). Depending on individual upbringing, lifestyle and values, the prescriptions of these traditional value systems can be important influences on African touristic behaviour. In other words, the cultural worldviews can be seen as resources in African tourists’ behavioural and attitudinal repertoires.
African Tourists: Ubuntu as a Mediator in Interpersonal Authenticity

In the case of some African tourists, both interpersonal communitas as well as notions of Being (linked to existential authenticity, as has been established) interacted closely with the African philosophy and practice of Ubuntu. Several African tourists and entertainers brought this up in their accounts, in relation to their interactions with tourists from different countries, races, social status, culture, and religion, and in relation to their Self concept. With specific reference to Zimbabwe, and contained with the philosophy of Ubuntu, the Shona concept of Ukama, meaning relatedness, also had an important role. Having close parallels with Ubuntu, Ukama stands for the conviction that reality is inherently relational (Murove, Prozesky, 2009). Ukama and Ubuntu thus became mediators in the interpersonal interactions between African and other tourists:

> You know, us Africans, we live by Ubuntu, which teaches us to relate well with others, to love others, to treat others with dignity and respect, to be welcoming and friendly, show love always. In a sense, we are the hosts, and we have to show our guests utmost hospitality. And so we socialise, setting aside any difference. We are all one, one big family, one human race. *(South African tourist, Interview transcripts)*

> In Africa we say umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, which means we always need each other to be complete as humans. No one can be complete without others. *(South African tourist, Interview transcripts)*

> In my culture, we are related to everyone in some way. We have Ukama, and we talk to each other, even strangers, from that perspective *(Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts)*

> It’s the essence of Unhu [the Shona version of Ubuntu], to interact in harmony with all, to show hospitality, warmth, friendship. It’s what we stand for as Africans. *(Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts)*

For these African tourists, entertainment was a space in which they could express their existential Africanness, in its interpersonal and intrapersonal forms (Wang,
2000), by engaging with their cultural worldviews. Indeed, Mangena & Chitando (2011, p. 234) assert that Ubuntu, in particular, as the ethical benchmark of African societies provides a guide to the African man and woman in whatever setting they are, within and outside tourism. To understand the tourist comments above though, some background on the philosophy and practices of Ubuntu is necessary.

Ubuntu is a word from the Southern African family of languages (Ndebele, Swati/Swazi, Xhosa, and Zulu), which takes the form omundu/muntu in the case of East African, Bantu speakers, or mtu in the case of Swahili, which is spoken by more than 100 million people in African communities (Nafukho, 2006). In Zimbabwe, Ndebele, the second most spoken language after Shona, also uses the term Ubuntu, while Shona uses the term Unhu. However, the most common usage is Ubuntu, which I adopt in this thesis. However, in trying to translate the concept to English, the challenges that occurred with “authenticity” also surface with Ubuntu. There is no word equivalent, although a degree of “dynamic equivalence” can be achieved at the text level. As Outwater et al. (2005) note, Ubuntu is not easily translatable; it represents not a thing, but a philosophy and way of life that is the foundation of many African societies, with complex cultural connotations. One of the most well known characterisations of Ubuntu is that provided by South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2005, p. 26):

Ubuntu is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound to yours...A person with Ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm, and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others...They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed...

Ubuntu stems from the traditional African aphorism “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”, which literally translates to “a person is a person through other persons”. Roughly, Ubuntu means “humaneness”, “humanity”, “caring and sharing”, or “being in harmony with all of creation”. It may also be understood as meaning “I am because we are” (Andreasson, 2010; McCarthy, 1999). It is seen as accounting for the
capacity of African culture to express compassion, dignity, reciprocity, harmony, with justice and mutual caring (Tomaselli, 2009). Other translations include “fellow feeling”, “I am what I am because of who we all are”, or quite simply “kindness” (Msafiri, 2008).

*Ubuntu* intersects with interpersonal authenticity in that it sees being human as “being-with-others”, and prescribes what being-with-others should be all about (Outwater, 2005). The intersection is much more explicitly captured by Olinger et al. (2007), who claim that the individual within the *Ubuntu* ethos has an “interpersonal nature”. A human being strives to develop *Ubuntu* through relationships with others, guided by a spirit of universal brotherhood (Olinger et al., 2007). Indeed, within the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, a human being only exists in relationship with others. Olinger et al. (2007) see *Ubuntu* as articulating a complex and multifaceted individuality wherein a multiplicity of “I”s exist, one for each relationship the individual is involved in. Thus, the individual owes his existence to others because “You are because I am”, “persons depend on persons to be persons” (Shutte, 2001, p. 25), and “I am because you are” (Mbigi, 1992, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 2000; Mbigi & Maree, 1995, Olinger et al., 2007; Outwater, 2005).

Many scholars have demonstrated how *Ubuntu*’s three key principles (spirituality, interdependence, and unity) are a significant influence in the way Africans relate among themselves, in all areas of their lives (Mbigi & Maree, 2005; Mogadime, Mentz, Armstrong, & Holtam, 2010; Motha, 2010; Ndletyana, 2003; Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; Elechi et al., 2010; Outwater, Abrahams, & Campbell, 2005; Rao & Wasserman, 2007; Seedat, et al., 2010). Forster (2010) notes that *Ubuntu* ranks very high among the few African Indigenous knowledge systems that are well known and critically regarded. *Ubuntu* has also been described as the gift that Africa will give to the world, and Western audiences are beginning to pick up on it, as exemplified in former United States President Bill Clinton’s references to the philosophy on international media (Bolden & Kirk, 2009).

According to Andreasson (2010), *Ubuntu* seeks to make whole what is socially, culturally, and spiritually kept separate, rather than recreating Other boundaries of
division. *Ubuntu* is not limited by biological ancestry, cultural background, or nationality (Andreasson, 2010; Mbigi & Maree, 2005; Mogadime et al., 2010; Motha, 2010; Ndletyana, 2003; Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; Elechi et al., 2010; Outwater, Abrahams, & Campbell, 2005; Rao & Wasserman, 2007; Seedat, et al., 2010). To an extent, therefore, we can theorise *Ubuntu* as the antithesis of Othering. In contrast to Western tourists’ tendency to Other, which I examined in Chapter Five, *Ubuntu* advances a philosophy of overall oneness of humankind. Thus instead of emphasising difference, it seeks commonality. This juxtaposition is a useful one, as it illuminates the differences in worldviews of different tourist groups.

In *Ubuntu* philosophy, the individual cannot exist of himself, by himself, or for himself (Bhengu, 1996, 2000). As Bolden & Kirk (2009) argue, this representation of the self as only discernible in terms of the social worlds in which we stand is quite distinct from traditional Western representations of individuality (for example, the Cartesian notion which states that “I think, therefore I am”). Similarly, as Olinger et al. (2007) and Seckinelgin (2002) argue respectively, Western cultures are founded on the political philosophies of Libertarianism and Liberalism, which place greatest emphasis on the rights of the individual, while *Ubuntu*’s communitarian approach occurs on the other end of the spectrum. Forster (2010, p. 245) illustrates the *Ubuntu* relational worldview very well:

When asking an African person who he or she is (*ungubani*?), the answer is always stated in a relational manner. A traditional answer would be one in which the individual identifies himself in relation to his ancestors, grandparents, parents, and wider social grouping, for example, ‘I am a descendent of the Jola clan, grandson of the great Mxolisi, child of my grandfather’s son Loyiso.’

Forster points out that in African *Ubuntu*, relationship as identity is an active engagement in the development of self-concept. He goes further and suggests that in *Ubuntu*, one’s truest identity comes not just from encountering another person (termed “relating”), but from a continuum of shared being (called “having a relationship”). In other words, the individual is not solitary, but is defined in terms of
his/her relationship with others: who I am is shaped by who I am in relationship with (Forster, 2010; Newenham-Kahindi, 2009). In Ubuntu, my relationships with others raise me up, rather than put me down; they also offer me life, rather than demand it from me (Forster, 2010). People approach all other humans with the attitude of sisterhood and brotherhood, as the case might be (Swansson, 2009).

As African tourists who embrace Ubuntu mingle with others in eatertainment spaces, they comport themselves interpersonally in a manner that might be unique from that of their Western counterparts, because they focus not on difference (the Othering tendency), but on humanity as fundamentally one. Furthermore, Ubuntu also shapes their view of themselves, intrapersonally, although this might not be easy to discern from outward behaviours, in and outside of tourism, and in and outside of liminality.

Hlonipha: Male-Female, Young-Old Interactions

A South African female tourist, in describing how she related with other tourists, made an interesting comment:

> Respect is the most important aspect of how I relate. I come from a tradition of ukuhlonipha- I am Zulu, you see, and I always have that in mind, you know. Especially with us women, respect and personal distance in public are key. That’s what we are taught, growing up, ukuhlonipha. (South African tourist, Interview transcripts)

This comment resonated with some of my own observations, as I noted in my fieldnotes:

> There is a subtle difference between Western and African female tourist behaviours. The majority of African women seem restrained, talking less, and not so keen to dance with strangers. Western (Caucasian) women appear far less restrained, they are asking some of the local men to dance with them in the centre. African women seem to have a shyness about them, which makes them less spontaneous. (Fieldnotes, January 2011)
*Hlonipha*, referred to by the South African tourist, is often translated as “respect through avoidance”, “to pay respect”, or simply, “respect” (de Kadt, 1998; Herbert, 1990; Rudwick & Shange, 2009). The ideas and principles of *Hlonipha* are widely practiced across Southern Africa (de Kadt, 1998; Frajzyngier & Jirsa, 2006; Rudwick & Shange, 2006). In Zimbabwe, *Hlonipha* exists as such in Ndebele, and the Shona virtue of *kukudza* or *kuremekedza* can be seen as the equivalent of *Hlonipha*, practised in traditional communities. To an extent, bearing in mind that traditional codes of behaviour are in decline due to the forces of urbanisation, globalisation, modernisation and Westernisation (de Kadt, 1998; Finlayson, 1984, 2002), *Hlonipha* can be seen as an ideal framework for understanding public behaviours of some African tourists. Prozesky (2009) asserts, however, that even with these changing socio-cultural dynamics, these relational worldviews remain deeply embedded in the consciousness and way of life of Africans, even if only partially.

Under *Hlonipha*, the prescriptions and proscriptions that govern interpersonal behaviours, particularly those of women, are innumerable, which many see as indexical of women’s disempowerment and subsequent inferior status in African traditional societies (Herbert, 1990; Rudwick & Shange, 2009). For example, the young daughter-in-law is traditionally expected not only to respect the elder members linguistically, but also to avoid them physically (Finlayson, 2002; Henderson, 2006); and to generally *Hlonipha* in many other various forms throughout her life. Other examples of interpersonal prescriptions for women include bending a knee when serving food, averting eyes from men and elders, and adopting a chaste disposition (Bhana, 2012). According to Vailati (2012), *Hlonipha* is implicit of every interpersonal relationship or interaction in communities where it is practised, including sexual behaviour, food, speech, and gestures (de Kadt, 1998). Thus, by some, *Hlonipha* is seen as a form of social engineering; an environment that reproduces male power, reinforcing the patriarchal system of exclusive privileges for men (Bhana, 2012; Moyo, 2007; Zulu, 2012). The acts of deference reproduce not only gender hierarchies, but also age hierarchies, where younger people *Hlonipha* in their interpersonal exchanges with older people (Bhana, 2012).
Some authors go so far as suggesting that Hlonipha is inherently sexist in neoclassical terms (Moyo, 2007).

As suggested by the tourist’s statements above, in eatertainment space, Hlonipha can find expression among African tourists when it affects how they relate interpersonally with other tourists; in other words, when it influences how they comport themselves. The tourist’s comment above would suggest that Hlonipha might be a source of restraint in otherwise spontaneous behaviours, for instance between female African tourists, and any male tourists. As a traditional prescription which dictates acceptable behaviours for women and men alike, it shapes possibilities for spontaneity and ultimately the potential for experiencing existential authenticity. For women in particular, it appears to lead to physical avoidance behaviours, wherein personal distance is of utmost importance, and certain lines cannot be crossed with members of the opposite sex, especially when they are strangers. For instance, an African female tourist who embraces Hlonipha might find it difficult to accept a request for a dance from a male tourist, even in the liminal atmosphere of eatertainment. Thus, even liminality has its limitations. Under Hlonipha, cultural prestrictions might act as obstacles to the expression of liminality and communitas, and effectively, to the experience and expression of existential authenticity.

Isithunzi: Dignity in Interpersonal Behaviours

Another African relational value system, referred to in Zulu and Ndebele as Isithunzi, and in Shona as Chitunzi, is of significance in understanding African tourists’ interpersonal behaviours. Its role could be gleaned from the following statement by a Zimbabwean tourist:

I felt very embarrassed when another man tried to dance with me. I don’t know the man, and maybe because of my culture, it felt a bit awkward. You know, in the African way, we care about dignity, and don’t dance with a strange man in public. You might be judged by others, if they think it is not chaste. You keep your distance from men, in everyday life, you know what I mean. But then I suppose in an experience like this you are supposed to just
let go and have fun, but it’s still hard. *(Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts)*

*Isithunzi* is most commonly translated as “dignity”, and is usually linked with the concept of “face” (de Kadt, 1998; Ncayiyana, 2007; Van Heerden, 2002). The idea of *Isithunzi* can be seen as referring to “face” from an African perspective. Indeed, “face” is a universal concept (Chan, 2006; Chong, 2011; Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002; Lahlou, 2008; Lin & Yamaguchi, 2011; Park & Guan, 2009; Pollock, 2007; Qi, 2011; Liao & Bond, 2011), although each society has its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving customs (Anchimbe, 2011; de Kadt, 1998).

In African society, to maintain *Isithunzi*, one needs to practice a measure of self-restraint. Failure to do so causes the loss of face, or losing one’s weight in character, dignity, imposingness, influence, and prestige (de Kadt, 1998). The driving motive of maintaining *Isithunzi* is therefore fear of ridicule and exposure in society. This has been demonstrated, for example, in a study where the majority of participants frequently referred to a common African phrase “*bazothini abantu*”, which can be translated as “what will people say” (de Kadt, 1998). The suggestion here is that where *Isithunzi* is concerned, it is far more important to do what is socially correct (that is, to maintain face), than to achieve what one wants as an individual.

Like *Hlonipha*, *Isithunzi* dictates what appropriate, dignified interpersonal behaviour is, and may act as a behavioural restraint in public, limiting spontaneity in tourism spheres. When spontaneity is limited, so can the expression of interpersonal authenticity, following from Wang’s (1999, 2000) characterisation of the latter. As de Kadt (1998) notes, the *Isithunzi* value system in practice means that the “public self” is always a critical consideration, so that the decisive factor as to a person’s standing is the view of the generalised other, hence, *bazothini abantu*. In tourism space, loss of face becomes a conspicuously public matter; the very loss of *Isithunzi*.

### 6.4 Intrapersonal Authenticity

So far I have focused on interpersonal authenticity, which is accessible to tourists in the context of human interactions in the social space of tourism, and in particular,
within the liminal space of eatertainment. In the following section I discuss the experience of intrapersonal authenticity, which involves bodily feelings and self-making (Wang, 1999, 2000).

Hedonism: Euphoria, Self-indulgence, and Embodied Experience

The experience of intrapersonal existential authenticity was suggested in various tourist behaviours and narratives, such as the recurrent celebration of “fun” and spontaneous self-indulgence, indicating a hedonistic effort to attain existential or experiential authenticity. The feelings of spontaneity, bodily pleasure, relaxation and self-making, contained therein, create the raw material for intrapersonal existential authenticity, as they are seen as defining what it means to be happy (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Zhu, 2012). To feel happy and to have fun in tourism are signals that the experience itself must create access to the real self, because humans are “happy” when they are where they should be, doing what they should be doing, being who they really are. It is important to note here, and indeed in all other instances of existential authenticity, that this happens independently of the authenticity of toured objects (Goulding, 2000; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Kjell, 2002; Olsen, 2002; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). In the pursuit of intrapersonal authenticity, therefore, the majority of tourists were interested more in the fun which could be had, and were prepared to overlook, to some degree, the fact that the experience might have been touristy or contrived, in the object-related sense:

I think the Boma experience is what you make of it. Yes, it is incredibly touristy and busy, but on the other hand, it can be fun taking part in the festivities, even if they are a bit contrived. My husband was in the hesitant camp, not wanting to dress up and play drums, but by the end of the night, we were both having a great time. (Grateful_travels, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

Sure, the whole thing is a bit tacky, and despite their attempts at recreating Great Zimbabwe, the final result is more Las Vegas than Victoria Falls. But, the Kingdom doesn't take itself seriously, and perhaps it's this light-hearted
approach to the absurdity of the whole complex that makes the atmosphere so festive and downright enjoyable. (Anonymous, Lonelyplanet)

The irrelevance of the authenticity of toured objects resonates with a postmodernist idea of tourism which argues that tourists can derive satisfaction from inauthentic (in the object-related sense) experiences as they do in “authentic” experiences (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Cohen, 2007; Goulding, 2000; Mazierska, 2002). As I have already argued, however, this does not mean that object authenticity is irrelevant to touristic experience; rather, it suggests that tourists can explore other avenues for fulfilment even when they encounter contrived cultural experiences, as they perceived with the Boma and other restaurants at Victoria Falls.

A further aspect of the embodied expression of existential authenticity derives partly from tourists’ affective responses to tourism experiences, expressed in their emotions. Tourists’ accounts on eatertainment were often filled with emotion:

The highlight of the evening was the floorshow. The cool African night was filled with the sounds of deep resonant male voices and driving beat of drums accompanied by the energy and intensity of the native dancers, their feet moving with swift rhythm on the dirt floor near the central fire pit. The food, the colors, the music, the throbbing rhythms. It was quite an evening.

(Peregrine, American tourist, Igougo)

I will never forget this experience. Never never! It went straight to my heart!

(American tourist, Interview transcripts)

..., we SO enjoyed ourselves. (Hez0, (white) South African tourist, Tripadvisor).

Yummy. Wish I could eat there again. (Rwethere, American tourist, Tripadvisor)

In the literature, emotions, as part of corporeal expression, have long been recognised as playing an important role in touristic experience (Brown, 2009; Chang, Wall, & Chang, 2008; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Matheson, 2005; McIntosh,
2004). Indeed, as Del Bosque (2008) notes, the importance of emotions in understanding consumer behaviour in general has increased. However, Wang (1999, 2000) suggests, in the search for intrapersonal authenticity, emotions need to be balanced with reason. In other words, to exist as an authentic self, one does not abandon reason to live according to the dictates of emotion, but must establish a balance between spontaneity and restraint, within the context of one’s possibilities or throwness.

**Self-concept and Self-actualisation**

Authenticity can be conceptualised in terms of commitment to self-values or self-concept (Erickson, 1995), as suggested in the ancient Greek philosophy “To thine own self be true” (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). Authenticity in this sense involves both owning one’s own personal experiences, and acting in accordance with one’s true self (Erickson, 1995; Gardner et al., 2005), in whatever circumstance, including in tourism experiences. For tourists, the importance of aligning the entertainment experience with one’s self-concept was evident in some online reviews. This is central to existential authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). As echoed by various other scholars, being authentic is about being true to one’s idea of self (Berger, 1973; Handler, 1986; Hegel, 1977; Sartre, 1992; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Trilling, 1972). The following examples of tourist narratives provide some clues about the role of self-concept in the context of entertainment at Victoria Falls:

We are not into these kinds of things AT ALL, and we had a great time. *(Krisztinav, South African tourist, Tripadvisor)*

I could forget about everything and just be me. It’s important to do you, you know. *(Zimbabwean tourist, Interview transcripts)*

If you have no conscience and fancy eating the creatures you came to Africa to see in the wild, then the Boma is the culinary experience for you. *(Raycarstairs, Scottish tourist, Igougo)*
It is clear that tourists were also involved in a process of evaluating whether their self-concept (who they see themselves as, who they want to be, and who they want to be seen as) against their involvement and behaviours in eatertainment space. Although tourists seemed to enjoy performing another culture, there is also an implied restriction in the mind of tourists to act within their self-identity or self-concept. As such, they could self-select out of roles and activities which they may have perceived to be in conflict with their idea of self, as the following comments reveal:

I am a fish eating vegetarian and had good eating options. *(Krisztinav, South African tourist, Tripadvisor)*

Why they’re not very tasty and look a bit like large, fat maggots, it seems to be looked upon as a manly pursuit to be able to chomp through a big juicy grub, even if it’s as appetising as eating offal. *(Raycarstairs, Scottish tourist, Igougo)*

Even while they were having fun in eatertainment, the concern with conformity to one’s true or core self was not set aside. It is a daily enterprise, regardless of situation (Gardner et al., 2005). The true self or self-concept is, however, a multifaceted, complex phenomenon (Davis, 2012; English & Chen, 2007; Erickson, 1995; Gardner et al, 2005; Gillath, Sesko, Shaver, & Chun, 2010; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Sirgy, 1982). Self-concept denotes the entirety of an individuals’ thoughts and feelings that have reference to themselves as the objects (Sirgy, 1982). The concept has been evoked to explore overt behaviours in various social situations (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985).

According to Sirgy (1982), self-concept encompasses the *actual self* (how persons perceive themselves), the *ideal self* (how persons would like to perceive themselves), and the *social self* (how persons present themselves to others). To accumulate self esteem, individuals seek experiences that enhance their self-concept. It could be suggested that the desire to be perceived as “manly”, highlighted in the tourist narrative above, can be seen as example of the role of the ideal self and the social self. “We are not into those kinds of things at all” highlights the importance of
the actual self, as does “I am a fish eating vegetarian”. All of them converge in influencing how individual tourists want to act consistent with their authentic self, that is, their self-concept. They encapsulate what Sirgy (1982) terms the self-consistency motive: the tendency for individuals to behave consistently with their view of themselves.

However, it cannot be assumed that tourists themselves know exactly what their idea of the true self is, or that they can articulate it. Further, self-concept is not static, but perpetually evolving in the dynamic circumstances of individual and social life (English & Chen, 2007). As Sirgy (1982) puts it, it (self-concept) is a self-system inflicted with internal conflict. It is constructionist, that is, the true self cannot exist as a fixed reality to be discovered by the subject, but as a negotiable perception that only exists in the mind. Therefore, self-making, an important dimension of intrapersonal authenticity, as evident in the alignment of self-concept and behaviours, is a complex and subjective construction.

Further, illustrating the complexity of intrapersonal authenticity, as Erickson (1995) notes, authenticity is not an “either/or” condition, which is to say that people are neither completely authentic nor inauthentic. Rather, authenticity and inauthenticity are matters of degree; so that it is more appropriate to describe people as being more or less authentic, instead of just authentic, or inauthentic (Gardner et al., 2005); there are no absolutes. In addition, as Chen et al., (2006) aptly point out, it is neither feasible nor adaptive for a person’s complete self-knowledge to be accessible all at once; thus the idea of working self-concept, which refers only to self-aspects that are accessible in a particular, current context. Hence all tourists could only engage with certain aspects of their true self, in the ongoing pursuit and experience of intrapersonal authenticity in eatertainment experience.

Performativity and Tangibility of Experience

Tourist accounts frequently made reference to both the performative (what tourists could do or did, actively), and tangible aspects of the eatertainment experience (physical cues). With regard to the former, tourists highlighted what they were able to hear, smell, taste, and watch, which made the experience an interactive one, as
opposed to a passive one. Thus there was an implicit de-emphasis of the passive “tourist gaze”, which has justifiably been criticised for privileging seeing over other forms of touristic performance (Abbink, 2009; Edensor, 2000, 2001; Macdonald, 1997; Urry, 1990; White, 2007). The following examples highlight the performativity of eatertainment experiences:

Your offered the chance to eat an African worm during the festivities, and if you so partake, a certificate is awarded. *(Steve9631, American tourist, Tripadvisor)*

Oh my God, the Boma! So much to do, so much to taste, so much to watch, so much, so much! *(South African tourist, Interview transcripts)*

This place is not really a restaurant as such but more of a tourist experience that you get to eat food and have activities like drum play, fortune telling etc... *(Sanfranciscobritgirl, American tourist, Tripadvisor)*

...what was most fun for me was the interactive drumming session. *(Texasworldtraveller, American tourist, Tripadvisor)*

As Wang (1999, 2000) has shown, performativity (active experience/performing tourist activities) is an important aspect of existential authenticity. Knudsen & Waade (2010) conceptualise this as performative authenticity, wherein tourists authenticate experiences through how they actively perform in tourism spaces. Tourists therefore authenticate their experiences in an existential sense by doing, seeing, tasting, and touching. This action orientation, or activity-relatedness of existential authenticity, advocates a shift from approaching tourism as merely “gazing at natives”—the so called “tourist gaze” (Abbink, 2009; Clarke & Hiscock, 2009; Enevoldsen, 2003; Hollinshead, 1992; Macdonald, 1997; Urry, 1990; Walsh, 2002; White, 2007), to examining tourists as performers (Edensor, 2000, 2001).

Active involvement is perhaps the reason why the Boma Restaurant in particular is one of the most popular restaurants. It has been argued that modern tourists experience greater satisfaction in experiences which are characterised by a high degree of participatory involvement (Middleton & Clarke, 2001). The Boma’s
emphasis on interactive involvement is clear in its marketing message, as highlighted before. There is also a clearly discernible attempt to “tangibilise” the cultural experience for tourists in its marketing collateral (www.thebomarestaurant.com), by providing physical cues of cultural objects that are part of the restaurant’s offer, such as the drums, and the various foods to be sampled. Tangibility is important because the intangibility of tourism experiences is a concern for tourism marketers (Chang & Tarn, 2008; Flipo, 1988; Kuo-Chen & Tarn, 2008; Laroche, Bergeron, & Goutaland, 2001; Laroche, McDougall, Bergeron, & Zhiyong, 2004; Maccarrone-Eaglen, 2009; Mittal, 1999; Tarn, 2005). There was, in tourist accounts, extensive reference to tangible cultural objects, which helped to tangibilise the Zimbabweaness or Africanness of the experience, for example:

This particular gathering place is meant to look and feel like a Ndebele village with its forest setting, thatched roofs, and hypnotic African drums. It's unabashedly touristy, but if you want a taste of Africa, this is the place to come. Which was why I was here. (Peregrine, American tourist, Igougo)

Notwithstanding the persuasiveness of performative authenticity, however, its link with intrapersonal authenticity is perplexing because “performing” suggests that tourists take on a “role”, in an “acting” sense. This obviously appears to be at odds with the idea of being “authentic”, existentially. However, the sense in which performativity is meant is that of active involvement, as opposed to passive and distant consumption. Zhu (2012) explains that performative actions create a sense of authenticity by transforming “doing” to “meaning making”. Thus, performative authenticity emphasises “becoming” authentic through embodied practice, intertwined with self-conscious actions, and a profound rearrangement of the self (Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Zhu, 2012).

What is patently clear in the reviews is that tangible cues and performativity made the experience more memorable for tourists, as evident in the detail of tourist narratives. The cues provided tourists with a heightened sense of immersion in the liminal experience, while at the same allowing for more bodily engagement through touching, hearing, smelling, seeing, and tasting. Interacting with the liminality of
eatertainment, both interpersonal and intrapersonal authenticity became possible, simultaneously, feeding off each other.

**Ubuntu, Hlonipha, and Isithunzi: Authenticity-Inauthenticity Tensions**

From an intrapersonal perspective, traditional African value systems, are potential sources of inauthenticity tensions in tourists. With its emphasis on consensus and the greater good, *Ubuntu* can be seen as lending itself to a conformist code of behaviour, wherein the greater good overrides individual preferences, and individual convenience. As I have already highlighted, within the *Ubuntu* value system, individuality signifies a plurality of personalities corresponding to the multiple relationships in which the individual in question stands. Thus, as Nafukho (2006) captures so well, the *Ubuntu* conception of individuality entails moving away from solitary to solidarity, from independence to interdependence, and from individuality vis-à-vis community, to individuality à-la community (Nafukho, 2006). One’s humanity has meaning only when others acknowledge it; therefore, it is one’s relationship with others which enhances their humanity and self-worth (Tomaselli, 2009). Thus, in the case of African tourists, the value systems of *Ubuntu, Hlonipha,* and *Isithunzi* can be theorised as important aspects of that world, or situatedness (Orbanic, 1999); in the sense in which we speak of “the world of business”, or “the academic world” (Guignon, 2012).

By implicitly accepting and acting consistent with their facticity, constituted in part by these relational worldviews, African tourists risk being inauthentic, because then their responsibility of choice is ceded to an existing standard. If *Ubuntu,* or any other relational value system, is adopted without actively questioning and owning it, then African tourists might be seen as existing as Heidegger’s inauthentic “the They” or Das Man (Gibbs, 2010). Even though human beings are thrown into a world that is not of their choosing, to move from the inauthentic state of the They, persons need to evaluate their “possibilities”, and make choices, so that they have their own point of view on matters that relate to their world (Guignon, 2012). The stance taken in respect of available choices is termed the “projection” of possibilities. Therefore, our agency as beings, is always complicit in the project of “self-making” via the choices...
we make, whether we realise it or not (Guignon, 2012). What this suggests is that, following any cultural value system, without any active personal evaluation of the philosophy means that African tourists exists on the level of “average everydayness”, being lost in the average public collective (Gibbs, 2010), as a result of the conditioning by practices which they have been enculturated into (Gibbs, 2010; Guignon, 2012; Salem-Wiseman, 2003).

To be authentic, then, in the Heideggerian sense of the word, African tourists would need to project their own possibilities after a process of personal evaluation of choice. Without this active engagement with the constitution of their own comportment, the inauthentic “They self” emerges, characterised by evading choice, and “doing what one does” (Gibbs, 2010). When they do this, they abdicate personal responsibility to do “what one does as one does it”, simply because this “the way Africans do it”. One needs to be a respondent who can respond to questions about individual actions and the reasons for them. Thus to be authentic, one needs to “choose to choose” (Guignon, 2012; Heidegger, 1962, 1996). However, as Guignon expresses it, Dasein’s relation to tradition is ambivalent: it must respect the possibilities of being that it is thrown into, making it the entity it is, while at the same time challenging and rethinking that tradition in shaping its own existence.

For Steiner & Reisinger (2006), to be authentic in Heiddegerian terms, tourists need the attitude of mineness (realising that individuals can have possibilities of their own that are not shared with others), and resoluteness (the courage and tenacity to claim one’s own possibilities than simply adopt those of the average collective). Hence if an individual is to retain existential authenticity while practising Ubuntu, Hlonipha and Isithunzi, there needs to be a personal conviction first and foremost, and an ongoing internal dialectic, because an authentic person is an interpretive being, constantly seeking and acting on possibilities.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I explored the experience of existential authenticity in tourist eatertainment, independent of toured objects. I demonstrated the role of liminality
and tourist communitas. With specific reference to African tourists, I illustrated the role of three African relational worldviews or value systems, namely Ubuntu, Hlonipha, and Isithunzi, in mediating interpersonal interactions. These, I suggested, could be seen as part of African tourists’ behavioural repertoire in tourism spheres, as they form part of individual facticity or thrownness in African traditional cultures.

I also examined, through the lens of these worldviews, the issues of “face”, dignity, and the Self, as discernible only in relationships, within fundamental African thinking. I then gave practical examples of how these traditional behavioural standards might have affected African tourists’ comportment in relation to other tourists throughout the entertainment experience. By opening a discussion of these African worldviews in the present study, I attempted to provide a new avenue of inquiry in culturally situated studies of touristic experience.

Further, I juxtaposed Western touristic Othering and African Ubuntu, to demonstrate an important attitudinal and philosophical difference between African and Western touristic thinking. Such juxtaposition has not yet been made explicit in tourism studies, and my attempt therefore represents an important contribution to the understanding of African and Western cultural differences. However, Othering is an ambiguous and multifaceted concept, manifesting in many forms. It is an area of inquiry that requires further investigation, particularly from the emic perspectives of Othered cultures.

Further, drawing primarily from Wang’s (1999, 2000) conceptualisation of interpersonal and intrapersonal existential authenticity, I explored the importance of embodied experience, performativity, self-identity, self-realization, and living in accord with one’s sense of self, as reflected in tourist narratives. It was clear that the experience of existential authenticity is at the centre of tourist experiences and more importantly, it is a highly personal process. Tourists negotiate the reality of their own experiences on a purely internalised basis. However, the authentic state of Being remains a highly elusive one.
7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Consolidation of Key Findings and Theoretical Implications

Object authenticity quests are not universally relevant

At the core of this thesis, I demonstrated that authenticity, as a touristic quest, is culture specific; that object authenticity is neither universally relevant, nor universally redundant. Specifically, within the context of my empirical study, I illustrated that Western tourists primarily sought object authenticity, while their African counterparts were more interested in artistry, entertainment value, and aesthetic aspects of eatertainment experiences. Unless probed directly, they (African tourists), never made reference to authenticity, either explicitly or through related concepts such as “original culture”. Western tourists, on the other hand, explicitly evaluated the experience in relation to object authenticity.

However, as I indicated, the limited scale of the present study means that such a comparison between Western and African tourists is not conclusive, but subject to further reflection and investigation. The study therefore produced only local theory—a tale of the field, on which future research can build to verify whether, indeed, the characterisation of both groups of tourists is valid in other contexts. The present study therefore serves as a preliminary exploration which opens up avenues of enquiry on African tourists, who have seldom been studied in the tourist role.

The lack of conceptual equivalent for “authenticity” (at the word level) in Zimbabwean vernacular (Shona and Ndebele) offers a further basis for demonstrating the cultural specificity or relativity of the importance of object authenticity to touristic experience of eatertainment at Victoria Falls. What this points to is the possibility that many theoretical concepts in tourism, beyond authenticity and its related terminologies, articulate worldviews that may not necessarily be accessible or important to African and other non-Western cultures.
However, that authenticity was a sensibility firmly imprinted in the Western psyche, and translated in their behaviour, refutes postmodernist suggestions that object-related authenticity is redundant; or that indeed, tourists now only seek and delight in inauthentic experiences, in the object-related sense. The findings demonstrate just the opposite in relation to Western tourists—they were disappointed when they felt the experience to be contrived and fake, and expressed satisfaction when they perceived eatertainment to be authentic, whatever “authenticity” meant to them.

Western tourists’ attempts to expose possible deceit by the fortuneteller were impressive, albeit flawed and not necessarily effective. However, the very attempts demonstrate that they are not as gullible as they have often been portrayed to be, nor are they passive observers of a tourist deception project. In addition, and very significant, the explicit search for “coolly” authenticated objects further refutes suggestions that object-related authenticity has lost its relevance to touristic quests, in light of the claimed postmodern tourist by some scholars.

However, the cultural specificity of authenticity quests has further theoretical significance. It means that object-related authenticity is not appropriate as a theoretical framework for studies in which no distinction is made between Western and non-Western tourists, and in particular, where African tourists are homogenised in a broad prototypical label of “a tourist”. Existential authenticity, on the other hand, and unlike object-related authenticity, transcends cultures. Therefore, existential authenticity is a more inclusive and appropriate theoretical framework for broad studies of tourists, which span cultural boundaries. Further, studies and discussions of tourists’ authenticity quests should be clear on which types of authenticity they address (existential versus object-related forms).

While demonstrating the cultural relativity of object authenticity quests, I echoed previous studies, showing how the construction of authenticity is a socially contingent phenomenon (Kim & Jamal, 2007), where tourists are actors in a social process that elevates cultural eatertainment objects to authentic status. I showed that the construction of authenticity is a conflicted, contradictory, and non-linear process, wherein tourists move back and forth from cultural objects and their beliefs, held
stereotypes, imagination, and background, to assign authenticity or inauthenticity to a cultural object or experience, hence *contested authenticity*. In the process, they validate, educate, miseducate, contradict and interrogate themselves. They question the addition to their cultural capital made by the cultural immersion. They are cynical yet generous with their evaluation of cultural authenticity.

It is interesting to note that tourists from Pennsylvania, for instance, could make a bold comment about the authenticity of a Zimbabwean beverage, *chibuku*, for instance. How does a tourist from the United States arrive at this judgement? What criterion or criteria is this judgement formed from? How did the tourist in this instance distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic? The answers to these questions are part of an enduring debate in tourism on the projection of authenticity *onto* objects, refuting the idea of authenticity as an attribute that is intrinsic in cultural objects, as the realist/ objectivist school would suggest. In the final analysis, authenticity, object-related or otherwise, as Chang et al. (2008) so expressively put it, is in the eyes of the beholder. If this is accepted, then objective authenticity is untenable, and constructive authenticity has the strongest case.

Overall, what may be concluded is, the suggestion that tourists are generally no longer concerned with authenticity is at best, an oversimplification, and at worst, false. Further, the frustration with failing to reach consensus over how authenticity can be operationalised is understandable, but inadequate as a basis for dismissing the role of authenticity in touristic experience. It is clear, though, that if authenticity theory is to develop further, a high level of specificity with regards to terminologies and meanings is required. Also, integrative approaches that consider various schools of thought would be beneficial, rather than those which treat the subject of authenticity as a monolithic one, when it is clearly a plural, multifaceted phenomenon.

**Politics: Evidence and substantiation of “hot” and” and “cool” authentication**

Seeking to go beyond the overworked area of authenticity types, I examined Cohen & Cohen’s (2012) thesis within the broader authenticity debate, focusing on providing empirical analysis of “hot” and “cool” authentication. My thesis therefore
directly responds to Cohen & Cohen’s (2012, p. 1311) own appeal for empirical substantiation of their authentication conceptualisation, wherein they state “we hope that the conceptual basis we have developed will open new avenues of empirical research”. I also attempted to illustrate the role played by authentication in touristic experiences, both as a quest and as a participatory act on the part of tourists. Specifically, I provided evidence of touristic quests for authenticated objects, particularly in the “cool” sense, and how their (tourists’) own contestation and attribution of authenticity contributes to “hot” authentication processes in relation to the toured objects and experiences of eatertainment.

It is important to emphasise that “hot” and “cool” authentication are not mutually exclusive. In other words, objects that are “coolly” authenticated may simultaneously be “hotly” authenticated or deauthenticated through the contestation of their status. For example, a souvenir might carry “cool” authentication in the form of a signature of the artist who made it, but its authenticity may still be debated by the tourists who view it, based on other sources of information. They may then endow it with “hot” authentication, via their performative acts and exchanges, and possible purchase behaviour.

I provided several tentative explanations for the low level of “cool” authentication in tourism. This is important in understanding cultural producers’ (for example, the local performers in eatertainment venues) actions (or inaction) in relation to the “cool” authentication of toured objects. These explanations included: tourism providers recognise that tourists are not so gullible as to accept claims of “cool” authentication at face value; the moral/ethical repercussions of seeking authentication for overtly “staged” or “fake” toured objects; shifting the responsibility for contesting authenticity to tourists; and, the cost of authentication, which could be prohibiting, as in the case of accreditation and certification by official institutions. However, the levels of “cool” authentication for tourism attractions might rise if there were proven, tangible benefits of the same. In addition, there are attractions or toured objects which exist as social constructs, and which, therefore, cannot be linked directly to any particular formal institution as owner or
custodian. For such attractions, therefore, no mediator exists to seek “cool” authentication, or indeed, any form of authentication.

What is beyond contention is that both “cool” and “hot” authentication are never really complete. Even “cool” authentication is perpetually incomplete because, after any declarative act of authentication, one question still remains: who will authenticate the authenticator? Put differently, how expert is an expert? Who makes the judgement about the “expertness” of an expert? It is arguable that expertness is vested into an authority by subjective perception, so that there could never be an absolute, incontestable expert. Instead, there is only a perceived expert. In the case of “hot” authentication on the other hand, incompleteness always holds true, by Cohen and Cohen’s (2012) definition. The same can be said about deauthentication, that is, for deauthentication to be given credit, the deauthenticator needs to be credible, even, and especially, in the case of “cool” deauthentication.

It may also be stated that both the distinction and overlap between authenticity and authentication are very subtle, so that they run the risk of being conflated. Therefore, the relation between authentication and authenticity must be clear, at a juncture when the theory is in its formative stage: as Cohen and Cohen (2012) aptly put it, authentication is the social process by which toured objects are imbued with the quality of being authentic. Making such a simultaneous distinction and connection explicit is essential given the track record of authenticity as a phenomenon within which confusion abounds, partly because of the lack of clarity in what it, (and related terms), mean. Thus the value of future research on the issue of authentication will be predicated, among other things, on the extent to which this clarity and consistency in the lexicon is upheld.

Othering is concomitant to Western touristic experience

I attempted in this thesis to juxtapose the contrasting worldviews implicated in the Othering tendencies of Western tourists, and African tourists’ choice to view the world through the lens of Ubuntu. As other studies have already shown, I demonstrated, particularly through netnography, that Othering is an important discursive theme in touristic experience, occurring for the most part as a Western
ethnocentric projection of (presumed) self-normativity over the Other, but also as self-exoticisation (that is, self-Othering) by the Indigenous hosts themselves. In relation to the latter, is not incidental that Mopani worms, for instance, were on the menu in tourist restaurants (with a certificate awarded at the Boma), whereas they are not necessarily on the menu in most Zimbabwean homes. The Indigenous culture marketers are aware that a worm is an apt symbol of Other food; it is perhaps the furthest thing from the Western idea of food. The worm, together with the award of a certificate for anyone who dares to eat it, are pregnant with meaning—they are about communicating an image which will entice the tourist to hunger for an “exotic” African experience.

I argued that for (Western) tourists, Othering is implicated in the hegemonic inclination to see the Westerner-self as epitomising “normalsy” in terms of difference from the Other in less developed nations. It is worth noting also that food in tourism space offers an ideal lens through which Othering tendencies may be discerned critically. The presumption of normativity among tourists was often conveyed subtly, but sometimes overtly, in the description of Zimbabwean food, in online reviews, as “yucky”, “unusual”, “disgusting”, “not for the squeamish”, “exotic”, “will make your stomach turn”, “tasted like feet”, “tastes like charcoal dirt”, and “overcooked shoe leather”. The candour of tourist commentary in online platforms, illustrated by these descriptions of food, also provides a strong case for the merits of netnography, where tourist-generated-comment, unsolicited by the researcher, can be much more revealing of tourist mindsets than data obtained otherwise. Thus I argued that indeed, as other authors have suggested, netnography offers more self-interpretive, and highly illuminating data for qualitative tourism research.

Liminality and encapsulation occur in eatertainment, transcending cultural boundaries

I examined liminality and “communitas”, as conduits for existential authenticity in the eatertainment context, and highlighted that the phenomena transcend cultural boundaries. An important dynamic in liminal space was the performative
engagement of tourists, which represents them as “performers”, rather than “gazers”, and adds to the critique directed towards the idea of the “tourist gaze” (Abbink, 2009; Enevoldsen, 2003; Hollinshead, 1992; Macdonald, 1997; Urry, 1990; White, 2007). Indeed, the tourist gaze has already been criticised by many scholars of tourism, who emphasise that tourists are performers (for example, Edensor, 2000, 2001).

Furthermore, I provided various examples of evidence of liminality and communitas, such as the childlike play and dancing in circle formations at the Boma, and the spontaneous formation of dancing partners between tourists of very different backgrounds. I also illustrated how in eatertainment, the dialectic between encapsulation and decapsulation is vividly evident. The deliberate designs of encapsulation, aimed at demarcating the extraordinary from the ordinary, were on display in most restaurants, as exemplified by the dancefloor activities at the Boma, where tourists from all over the world were invited to “party”, dancing for the most part to unfamiliar music, out of rhythm, but not seeming to care.

It is also significant for theory to note, as I demonstrated, that both Heidegger’s (1962, 1996) and Wang’s (1999, 2000) understanding of existential authenticity depend on tourists’ internal processes of negotiating behaviours that are consistent with what they accept as their true, or “authentic” selves. Thus, the two conceptualisations are not necessarily ontologically inconsistent or mutually exclusive. Heidegger, however, conceptualises the authentic self in the context of lifelong choices and possibilities, while Wang focuses on the short-lived, euphoria-like experiences in the liminal zones of tourism.

**The role of African relational worldviews**

In the case of African tourists, an important point made in this thesis is that the African value systems of Ubuntu, Hlonipha, and Isithunzi, operating as a consciousness in African tourists, and translating into behavioural repertoire, mediate the interactions they had with other actors in eatertainment spaces, and therefore their potential to experience and express existential authenticity in its interpersonal and intrapersonal senses. I also argued that Ubuntu, Isithunzi, and
*Hlonipha* can be seen as forming part of African tourists’ facticity or thrownness, in the Heideggerian sense. Some African tourists, particularly those living in more traditional communities, are thrown into a world in which these values are part of what regulates “one’s” behaviour, also in Heidegger’s *das Man* or “the They” sense, or the public self. Thus they might have the urge to comport themselves in the *Ubuntu*, or *Hlonipha*, or *Isithunzi* way, because this is, for them, “what one does”. However, if this is achieved at the expense of personal authenticity (intrapersonal), then interpersonal prescriptions might preclude the experience of intrapersonal existential authenticity, resulting in an internal tension.

I suggested different ways in which this behavioural repertoire, based on African relationality, could be expressed in practice, in eatertainment space. For example, with specific focus on male-female interpersonal interactions, the value system of *Hlonipha* for African women was of particular relevance. I argued, drawing from tourist narratives, that *Hlonipha* potentially limits the spontaneity of African women when they interact with unfamiliar tourists, particularly if the latter are male. Their socialisation under *Hlonipha* would dictate proscriptions and prescriptions about personal distance, chaste behaviour, and physical avoidance, all of which affect their comportment directly, in interpersonal association. I also explained how *Isithunzi* intersects with the social construct of “face”, with its concern about *bazothini abantu* (“what will people say”), in relation to acceptable behaviours in the public space that is eatertainment. I conclude, therefore, that traditional or cultural worldviews can have a direct impact on the experience and expression of interpersonal authenticity, because they bear directly on interpersonal behaviours.

However, the mediation process for these cultural worldviews and practices is not straightforward; indeed their very relevance is not guaranteed for all African tourists, in and outside eatertainment space. Individual tourists have the option to choose whether or not to act according to the prescriptions of any cultural worldviews and practices they have been socialised into. Further, the mediation process is not linear because of the potential tension between the value systems themselves. For example, as I pointed out, *Hlonipha*, with its focus on gender-based and age-based demarcations of social status, can be viewed as contradicting *Ubuntu*,
with its focus on humanity as One. Further, urbanisation and Westernation have been shown to exist in tension with traditional cultural practices, creating a source of tension in their adherents when they are exposed to the opposing forces. Africans existing in modernity might feel simultaneous and opposing pressures from traditionally expected standards of behaviour, and the desire to embrace the egalitarian worldviews of Western modernity, which challenge gender-based, socio-status prescriptions, for example.

The two forms of existential authenticity, interpersonal and intrapersonal, interact continually, feeding off each other. Tourists can search for, and experience, both forms, concurrently. This is important as their separation into distinct categories, while useful for analytical purposes, can easily be misinterpreted as suggesting a relationship of mutual exclusivity. The constant internal negotiation of state of Being (intrapersonal authenticity), can occur in the context of authentic interpersonal relationships. Tourists cannot suspend their intrapersonal self-making, simply because they are interacting with others.

**7.2 Implications for Practice**

The relative insignificance of object authenticity to African tourist experiences visiting Victoria Falls restaurants is of particular importance for tourism practitioners serving this market. It strongly suggests that their marketing collateral, as contrasted to messages targeting Western tourists, does not need to engage with authenticity discourses to entice African tourists. Rather, tourism businesses serving African tourists might benefit from incorporating messages about African relational value systems such as *Ubuntu* into their marketing and service delivery. This might create more effective, culturally-customised communications.

With regard to Western tourists’ search for object authenticity, the quest to expose deceit in front stages is evidence, albeit on a small scale, suggests that (Western) tourists are not always as gullible as has been often assumed (Quan & Wang, 2004); instead they are in many instances questioning the veracity of claims made about authenticity by tourism suppliers. Western tourists were clearly conscious of the
possibility of deceit in commercial tourism enterprise (Taylor, 2001). Therefore, tourism practitioners at Victoria Falls need to be more aware of market perceptions about the authenticity of their cultural representations, because, as I have demonstrated, authenticity is a subjective ascription. In other words, tourism suppliers do not necessarily need to manage the authenticity of toured objects *per se*, but perceptions thereof. At the same time, they need to recognise the fickleness of tourists’ judgements; to understand that tourists are willing to perceive authenticity in an “African cultural experience” which includes chocolate pudding, for example. It is also worthwhile for hospitality practitioners considering enhancing their products via local cultural augmentations to consider the broader socio-cultural implications of commercialising culture. As tourists inevitably comment on authenticity of cultural entertainment, in the process potentially causing offence to local communities, consulting local community representatives on proposed cultural representations might be expedient.

The role of Internet technology as a platform for tourist-generated-content, which I demonstrated through netnographic data, has important implications for managing tourism businesses in the “Web 2.0 age”, wherein the capabilities for exchanging information about tourism and other products are continually and exponentially growing. It is clear that tourism businesses need to embrace this technology, and more importantly, respond to it appropriately. The low level of managerial responses to tourists’ reviews on Tripadvisor.com, for example, shows that the tourism industry has not yet fully accepted the paradigm shifting impact that Internet technologies have on the agency of the tourism consumer, as well as the potential to harness this platform to manage their businesses’ image in the market. Increasingly, it is online image which matters the most, because of its capacity to reach people all over the world. Through responding to online reviews through the facility offered by Tripadvisor.com, for example, tourism businesses can rebut comments, recover service, respond to questions, provide additional information, and apologise for service failures.

The importance of performativity (tourists actively participating in the production of the experience), apparent in tourist narratives, as opposed to passive gazing, also has
important implications for eatertainment providers. There was a clear, enthusiastic response to the invitation to participate in the actual production of cultural representation, which virtually all tourists reviewed favourably. The imperative from this observation is the need to make tourist experiences more embodied, participative, interactive, and performative. As Knudsen and Waade (2010) have argued, part of tourists’ authentication of experience involves touching, doing, seeing, tasting, trying, talking, listening, and hearing, all of which constitute authentication by embodied experience. In sum, it can be inferred that eatertainment experiences became more “real” when tourists did more than gazing at “natives”.

Tourists’ pleasant surprise in finding that the restaurants were more than “just a buffet restaurant”, as in the case of the Boma, is illustrative of the impact of augmenting services by adding unanticipated attributes. Tourist reactions also highlight the challenge for restaurateurs to continually enhance their product/service packaging. Of course, as I showed, beyond the excitement that accompanies discovering that a restaurant is really a cultural experience, tourists found themselves engaged in an internal debate over whether this cultural experience “proceeds from its stated source” (Jones, 2010). That restaurant experiences are, and should be, much more than a meal is however not new to tourism theory, as illustrated in the concept of basic, core, and augmented product levels (Bojanic & Kashyap, 2000). Cultural augmentations elevate the consumption of food to an exercise in acquiring cultural capital. For diners, the focus of the experience is partly diverted from the food to a process of cultural immersion, education and exchange.

There is a further point to be made regarding tourists’ evaluation of the restaurant experience. Overall, it appears that the “total experience” as opposed to individual components of the experience, was more important in their final evaluation. This again reflects the experiential nature of tourism consumption. As such, individual components of the experience must combine synergistically into one memorable experience, an observation which is critical for success in tourism and hospitality practice. For tourist eatertainment experience providers, an important practical lesson is the need to view the experience as a whole, and to present it as such. The emphasis on the “total experience” also highlights, for restaurants, the importance of
thinking beyond the food on the plate. Tourists, although expressing a concern with the high prices charged by the Boma Restaurant, for example, still recommended it as worthwhile because “all in all” it was a good experience. Secondly, tourists’ reference to having been “pleasantly surprised” should spur restaurateurs to indulge their creative abilities; to endeavour to give tourists unexpected add-ons, and to create an experience “out of this world”.

In addition, it is important to recognize that restaurants cannot appeal to every tourist, however good they may seem. Tourists themselves recognize this and are willing to accept that what they may not enjoy themselves, other tourists may very well find pleasurable, thus “If you are into this sort of thing”. Therefore tourists themselves were ready to concede that tastes differ, and tourism suppliers, including restaurateurs, cannot meet everyone’s tastes and preferences. What is important is for restaurateurs to understand the needs of their specific target market(s).

Furthermore, the importance of collective authenticity is well illustrated in the reviews. Tourists enjoy the sociality of tourism experiences, and the presence of locals, other tourists, “relevant others” (spouse, friends, and other tourists) was an important component of the overall experience. For practitioners, this means that marketing collateral needs to reflect the social interaction concomitant to the experience. Mentioning group seating arrangements, compatibility with family (for example, seats for children), group discounts, and group activities, are some of the ways in which the opportunity for interpersonal authenticity can be reflected in cultural restaurant marketing messages.

A further interesting observation relates to the fusibility of front and back regions in tourist experience. This was evident from tourists’ construction of what is real or fake as impacted by locals’ involvement in the tourist space. Where a tourist facility is also a venue that locals frequent in their “normal” day-to-day life, the dichotomous ascription of front and back status to tourist space becomes problematic. Front and back stages in their traditional sense would refer to geographically demarcated regions, thus MacCannell’s (1973) advice to stay away from the main streets, shopping centres, and attractions where, for him, only staged
authenticity is present (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). I argued that back stages can reside within front stages, where tourist establishments also engage with the local market. Therefore, tourism businesses can enhance authenticity perceptions of their products by focusing on initiatives that attract both a local clientele as well as an international one. For Zimbabwe, this indeed resonates with recent developments and lessons in the tourism industry between 2000 and present. An industry which was overly reliant on international arrivals had to learn the hard way that investing in the domestic tourism market was essential for survival in a politically volatile environment; that (international) tourists could be “here today, gone tomorrow”.

7.3 Future Research

In this thesis I attempted to demonstrate how netnography can be a useful technique for investigating and understanding subjective realities and phenomenographic meanings of touristic experience that are provided by participants on their own terms. However, there is much more scope for adopting netnography as a research methodology in tourism studies. Indeed, netnography is still outside of mainstream research designs in tourism. Increasing the deployment of online research methods is timely as web-based technologies become globally accessible and cheaper, creating an everexpanding volume of potential netnographic data. More specifically, the continued growth of tourism/hospitality-related websites such as Tripadvisor.com and Virtualtourist.com confirms this trend.

In future, tourist studies researchers could make more extensive use of online data as a cheaper, tourist-empowering (as tourists determine the content of their text almost exclusively), expeditious, especially in studying populations which might be difficult to reach physically. As more and more tourists join the blogosphere, researchers have increased access to rich, self-interpretive, touristic experience data. Netnography has sufficient merit to become guarantee that, in future, it becomes firmly entrenched in tourism research methodology, as a virtual ethnographic technique. However, as with any technique that is still in its infancy, some grey areas still remain in relation to adapting traditional ethnographic techniques to the cyberscape as a fieldwork site. These grey areas require further investigation, and
include the ethical protocols associated with netnography, the actual process of carrying out netnography, sample sizes, and the degree and length of immersion in the virtual field. Further, at this stage, netnography is understood for the most part as it has been developed for market research. Rather than adopt mechanisms and protocols created for other disciplines, it is more desirable for the advancement of tourism theory, if tourism researchers developed their own, tailor made specifications which are responsive to the eccentricities of the tourism studies and the tourism industry.

The largely Western background of online reviewers in this study has significant implications for future research. It is demonstrative of the relative lack of access and/or use of online technologies, and, in particular, social networking technologies, among African tourists. Thus, if future research is to be more demographically representative of tourist perceptions of their experiences in Zimbabwe, data collection techniques that do not preclude the participation of some tourist segments would be required to triangulate online methods, as I have done with participant observation, interviews, and focus group discussions. It is hoped that other researchers, especially those in African tertiary institutions, will use the insights highlighted in this study to frame more empirical work in African tourist destinations, using paradigms and methodologies that increase access to African participants.

The encapsulation-decapsulation dialectic, which I interwove with the analysis of liminality and existential authenticity, requires further elucidation in the context of touristic experience. It is certainly a useful framework, both on theoretical and practical levels, for examining eatertainment, in relation to its orchestration by the tourism industry, as well as its impact on tourists as active performers. However, the role of liminality and communitas in tourism, while having been researched in a number of studies, could be illuminated further in specific contexts where it has not been explored in depth, such as African tourist destinations. Liminality is useful for understanding touristic experience, owing to its broad nature. Of course, this can be its downfall, because, potentially, anything and everything associated with tourists can easily be construed as representing some kind of liminality. However,
researchers could take advantage of this breadth to examine facets of the touristic experience that do not conform to the dictates of structured society; indeed, anything that is not “business as usual” (Smith & Riley, 2011), could be examined within a theoretical framework of liminality, with useful insights potentially drawn.

It would also be interesting to investigate in future research what happens when host-guest roles are switched, so that Africans are given an opportunity to review Western gastronomy in touristic experience. What sort of descriptors would emerge then? Would, for instance, unfamiliar Western food be seen as “wild”, “unusual”, “not for the squeamish”, and, “exotic”, and “disgusting”, as was the case with Western tourist descriptions in this study? Also, what would Africans say, if they were given the opportunity to respond, about tourist comments recorded in this study, in that connection? This can enhance the understanding of Othering and Otherness, through voicing the Other in a role that reverses typical host-guest ascriptions.

However, authenticity seeking is not the only research gap with respect to African tourists. It is safe to say that very little is known about African tourists in general. As I have consistently argued, the title of tourist has generally been construed to represent a Westerner, and as a result, studies focusing on the African as tourist are virtually absent from tourism theorising. As has been argued by a number of postcolonial tourism researchers, (for example Osagie & Buzinde, 2011), there is a need for future tourist studies scholarship to represent the Other as voiced, by which is meant that Others need to be allowed to speak on their own terms (Hope, 2006; Smith, 1999; Spivak, 1988), and for themselves (rather than being ventriloquised). Africans have been touring all over the world for decades, yet tourism literature has not actively represented them in this role, perpetuating the Other-as-host, Westerner-as-guest hegemonic dichotomy. It is notable however that increasingly, Asian tourists are also the focus of study.

What qualifies as “Zimbabweanness” and “Africanness” from the perspective of tourists and other stakeholders requires more in-depth reflection in future studies. In particular, new knowledge may be gained from analysing perspectives of
Zimbabweans and Africans in the same context (that is, at Victoria Falls restaurant experiences). How would their definition of a Zimbabwean or an African experience compare with that of Western tourists? However, given the cultural relativity of authenticity significance suggested by this thesis, for future studies in which various cultural groups of stakeholders are included, an existentialist theoretical framework might be the most expedient. Objectivist orientations would be less appropriate as they implicitly impose the assumption that object authenticity necessarily matters to all tourists. In particular, Wang’s (1999, 2000) existential authenticity is a more integrative and inclusive theory of authenticity, as it releases the study of touristic (cultural) experience from the confines of toured objects.

The question of authentication, which has only recently been tackled by Cohen and Cohen (2012), represents a further research gap in tourism research. While I attempted to develop and substantiate their ideas in this thesis, much more inquiry is required. Through focusing more on the processes of authentication, tourism theory is set to develop beyond the somewhat stale discussion and contention over object-related versus existential authenticity. Researchers can begin to answer the more insightful questions about underlying power dynamics, and in relation to existential authentication, about the nature of the internal process via which the existential state of Being is attained. I am suggesting here that Cohen and Cohen have tackled the authentication of objects, but the authentication of experience, occurring within individuals, remains unexplored. Future researchers might also consider examining the flip side of authentication in more detail, which would entail understanding of the process by which objects are ascribed the quality of being inauthentic (deauthentication).

It is also hoped that relational African philosophies such as Ubuntu, Hlonipha and Isithunzi, among others, which represent African ways of being and knowing, will find more application in tourism studies, to complement the vast literature based on Western axiologies, epistemologies and ontologies. What I have attempted to do in this thesis is to broach some examples of the impact of these value systems on the comportment of African tourists in the public space of eatertainment. However, much more could be done to further the understanding of African tourist
experiences. Such studies would be akin to projects which have sought to understand, for example, how cultural difference informs tourist behaviours (for example, Asian collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and face-saving behaviours). To merely use the label “tourists”, as though there was a standard prototype of such an entity, is to oversimplify matters; it is an untenable homogenisation. Of course, even “African tourists”, and “Western tourists” are homogenising labels, but not to the extent that “tourists” is. Tourism space is not “culture-free”; at least some attempt should be made to discern differences arising from different cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, more research is required to bridge the gap between Heidegger’s and Wang’s ideas of existential authenticity, whose relation in the context of tourism experience has been attempted only by Steiner & Reisinger (2006). Both are viable for exploring tourists’ experience of existential authenticity, and as stated earlier, they are also compatible. Thus, instead of tourism researchers aligning themselves only with Wang’s conceptualisation of existential authenticity, it may be beneficial to trace it back to the founding philosophers of theory on what it means to be truly authentic, of whom Heidegger is one. That is not to suggest that tourism researchers need to become experts of classical philosophies in order to appreciate touristic phenomena. Rather, I am proposing that to understand a concept in tourism that originated in other disciplines, it might be worthwhile to evaluate whether some meanings might have been lost in translation from the relevant parent disciplines.

To understand African tourists further, future studies could explore in more depth how they negotiate their encounters with representations of the authentic African Other. Such a project would require more critical approaches which question dominant power structures in touristic host-guest relations. It might add further insights if African tourists are investigated in non-African contexts, where they experience the staging of cultures other than their own. Even more interesting, studying African tourists living in the West, who are exposed to Western discourses such as authenticity, might help to uncover even richer meanings in relation to the role of acculturation and socialisation in shaping touristic quests, if they play any role at all. Thus, following from my hypothesis earlier that eatertainers had been
acculturated through their sustained interaction with Western tourists, I would recommend that future studies investigate its validity via quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies, and in different contexts. Further, how do discourses of authenticity in tourism texts of different kinds (online reviews, travel brochures, and so forth), influence tourist quests?

An additional avenue of inquiry which would yield very useful insights would be investigating translatability and conceptual equivalence in relation to taken-for-granted tourism phenomena, such as authenticity. The problems of untranslatability and non-equivalence have seldom been tackled in tourism, which is surprising. Tourism, or indeed, any other research area, occurs in many other languages apart from English, yet, many researchers, for practical reasons, will need to communicate their findings in English. With reference to authenticity in particular, although this is not the only phenomenon to which the challenges of translation are related, there have been many studies in non-English speaking countries. Similarly, there would be challenges in translating culturally specific terms from other languages into English. However, these issues have rarely been broached in tourism studies that have been conducted around the world. There is an implicit suggestion that translation challenges do not occur at all, or that researchers always know how to deal with them. This, surely, is a flawed assumption.

These research gaps notwithstanding, however, it is fair to say that authenticity theory is maturing, as scholars increasingly become more critical, seeking out underlying political and cultural issues. While some areas surrounding the theory seem somewhat fatigued at this point, authenticity appears set to remain an indispensable concept in the quest to understand touristic experiences and behaviour.
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### APPENDIX A: Interview guide for tourists (English/ Shona Versions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Shona</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your your nationality? Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your current country of permanent residence? Parizvino muri kugarepi?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where did you get information about the restaurant? Makanzwepi nezverestaurant iyi?</td>
<td>Parizvino muri kugarepi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What influenced your decision to go there? Makasarudza sei kuuya kuzodya ikoko?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe entertainment performances at the restaurant? Munoona sei kuratidzirwa kuri kuita tsika nemagariro zvemuZimbabwe kana muAfrica murestaurant iyi?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to your experience at the restaurant, how familiar were you with the dances and other entertainments at the restaurant? Musati mauya kurestaurant iyi, makanga mune ruzivo here nezvetsika nemagariro zvevaShona nemaNdebele?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were your expectations of the restaurant before you dined there? Makanga makatarisirei?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was learning about Zimbabwean/ African culture part of your expectation when you chose to dine at the restaurant? Zvanga zvakakusherai here kuti muzoona tsika dzemuZimbabwe?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you describe what you were thinking of when you were observing aspects of culture in the restaurant? Muchiona zvese zvanga zvichiitwa, makanga muchifungei?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who did you bring along? Makanga munani vamwe?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you interact with each other? Makaiti mose?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe how you felt bodily/physically? Muvirivainzwasa sei?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you feel emotionally? Ko mumwoyo nemumweya?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was going on in your mind? What were you thinking about? Maitifungei?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you buy any souvenirs? Makatenga zvivezwa nezvimwe here?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you like the most? Ndechipi chamakanyanyofarira?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why or why not? Nemhaka yei?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What sort of food were you expecting? Makanga makatarisira chikafu chakadii?</td>
<td>Munobva kunyika ipi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Shona Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you become involved in this industry?</td>
<td>Makapinda sei mubasa iri?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been entertaining at the restaurant?</td>
<td>Mava nenguva yakadii muchishanda murestaurant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How were you selected to perform as a group, and as individuals?</td>
<td>Makasarudzwa sei kuita basa iri?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you perform?</td>
<td>Munoitirei basa iri?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where did you train for this job?</td>
<td>Makadzidzira kupi basa ramunoita?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who trained you and for how long?</td>
<td>Makadzidziswa nani uye kwenguva yakadii?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the reason behind your success/popularity?</td>
<td>Chii chakanyanya kukosha pabasa ramunoita chinoita kuti mubudire uye mufarirwe sezvamunoita?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you describe your work at the restaurant?</td>
<td>Munganditsanangurira here zvamuri kupakurira kuvashanyi murestaurant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have you gained from performing at the restaurant?</td>
<td>Chii chamungati munobatsirikana nacho kubva pabasa renyu?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has it cost you?</td>
<td>Chii charinorwadza?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you encourage other locals to do what you do?</td>
<td>Mungakurudzira vamwe here kuti vaitewo semi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you aim to depict through your performances?</td>
<td>Munotarisira kuti vashanyi vawanei kubva pabasa renyu?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are guests responding well to your performances?</td>
<td>Vari kufara here maguests?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you know?</td>
<td>Munoziva sei?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you describe some guests’ reactions to your performances?</td>
<td>Kana mapedza, matourists anombotaura nemi here? Vanoti chii?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel about some of their comments?</td>
<td>Imi munonzwa sei?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of comments do you normally get?</td>
<td>Matourists anowanztotii?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does it feel when you perform?</td>
<td>Munonzwa sei kana muchiridza ngoma kana kuimba kana kudzana?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: The location of Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Source: http://livsaf.com/wordpress/?page_id=61