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The (audio) diary in tourism research: Revealing insight or rude imposition?

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Diaries have been used as a means of recording information since at least the ninth century. The introduction of printing technology helped the diary to develop as a personal record and reflection to be read by others. This format became widely known and early on, 'There was awareness that such methods could be used as a method of systematic observation and learning' (Alaszewski, 2006, p.6). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) contend that 'when carefully managed, and with suitable co-operation from informants, the diary can be used to record data that might not be forthcoming in face-to-face interviews or other data collection encounters. However, despite the development of new forms of technology during the twentieth century, the (reflective) diary has still been little used in consumer research.

This paper aims to tell the story of the second phase of a research study that employed depth interviews, audiodiaries and photo essays. The purpose of the second phase was to 'work deeper' with a group of participants. The first phase of the study had yielded interesting insights into the lives of the participant group but there was a feeling that much, much more would be uncovered, would be heard, if the 'right device' could be applied. The paper will review the literature on diaries, will describe the operation of the audiodiaries in this study, and will explore the synthesis of the audiodiary with depth interviews, photo essays and field observations. The process of interpretation of the diaries and the contribution to findings from the audio diaries will be detailed. Particular focus will be given to the interaction between the researcher and the study participants.

The overall study from which this paper emanates argues that tourism, getting away, cannot be considered without reference to home. It draws on the literatures of everyday life, tourism, home, mobility and second home ownership in the postmodern tourist consumption context. Study participants are all second home owners whose primary and second homes are in Ireland.

References:

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