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## **Bleisure: Motivations and Typologies**

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### **Key words:**

Business/leisure travel; bleisure; photo-elicitation; motivations; tourist typologies

## **Bleisure: Motivations and Typologies**

### **Abstract**

The theme of motivation in travel and tourism research has been largely dominated by a leisure focus and has consequently failed to reflect the changing landscape of business travel. This paper focusses on exploring the motivations of different types of '*bleisure travelers*': individuals who combine leisure with professional business obligations when abroad. We employ a multi-disciplinary mixed-methods approach, using photo-elicitation to identify and describe five types of bleisure. As existing theories of tourist motivations have mainly been developed in a leisure context, they fail to fully capture the nuanced scope and subtle context of business and leisure motives. We therefore draw upon experiential learning, boundary-less career theory, expectancy theory and social capital theory in order to put forward contemporary insights on the nexus between business and leisure tourism.

## **Bleisure: Motivations and Typologies (title)**

### **Introduction**

*International business travel* can be defined as travelling for an organization while crossing international borders (Westman, Etzion, and Gattenio 2008). As businesses continue to expand beyond borders in search of new opportunities, international business travelers exemplify an ever-increasing, yet disparate segment of the travel and tourist market (Gustafson 2012; Wang and Beise-Zee 2013; Cazanova et al. 2014). The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA 2016) identifies that global business travel spend grew by 5% between 2014 and 2015, and is forecast to reach \$US 1.6 trillion by 2020. However, research focusing on business travel and tourism has been largely dominated by policy-led and industry-sponsored work, which tends to internalize industry-led priorities and perspectives (Franklin and Crang 2001). Given the magnitude of international business travel and its role in driving innovation (Hovhannisyan and Keller 2015), further investigation into international business travel and tourism is merited.

Existing studies largely overlook travelers whose tourism motivations are initiated by business travel but incorporate non-business activities. These travelers combine tourism with professional obligations, reflecting the blurring of boundaries between business travel and leisure activities undertaken during a business trip. The term '*bleisure travelers*' is commonly used to define professionals who shun the all-work-and-no-fun toil of business trips by mixing them with leisure time (Bridge Street Global Hospitality 2014; WEF 2015). Although the bleisure trend is growing (WEF 2016), there is a lack of research on this hybrid type of travel (see Unger, Uriely & Fuchs, 2016).

In the constantly evolving travel landscape, a variety of disciplines and theoretical lenses have been used to research the complex cultural and social processes that unfold in international business travel. Some business travelers have always had the resources and professional flexibility to add leisure days onto business trips (N.B. 2015). Fewer studies focus on bleisure or on business travelers *per se*, beyond articles on the organizational requirements for physical proximity (Beaverstock et al. 2009; Gustafson 2014); the business travel experience (Unger, Uriely & Fuchs 2016); activities undertaken while on business trips (Smith and Carmichael, 2007) or working tourists (Cohen, 2011; Uriely and Reichel, 2000). Scholars have published on factors such as stress, strain and work-family balance (DeFrank, Konopaske and Ivancevich 2000; Westman, Etzion, and Chen 2008); business travelers' selection of lodgings/accommodations (Sammons, Moreo, Benson and Demicco, 1999) and if business travelers can be enticed back to a destination of holidaymakers (Kerr, Cliff and Dolnicar, 2012) – rather than different types of bleisure.

In this study, as a proxy for bleisure travelers we use *Business Development Managers* within a higher education context. These Business Development Managers travel abroad to develop new business by liaising, networking, recruiting and guest lecturing. While travel is initiated by business motives, these individuals are often able to integrate leisure into the trip. Existing literature has overlooked this form of travel (Pearce 2015). We take a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing from travel and tourism literature as well as HRM, *self-initiated expatriation* (SiE), knowledge-transfer, and international management disciplines. In doing so, we contribute to two strands of literature, business travel and traditional leisure travel, by developing a novel hybrid view of tourism that embodies the changing landscape of

international travel for business with leisure combined. Our contribution responds to calls for further research on travelers who combine business with leisure (Unger, Uriely & Fuchs, 2016), in addition to research that challenges conventional approaches to studying tourist decision-making by utilizing a new and different multi-disciplinary approach (McCabe, Li, and Chen, 2016). Moreover, more knowledge is needed by managers in HRM and in the tourism sector to address the needs of specific types/segments of travelers (Li and McKercher, 2016). Responding to the changing travel landscape, it is important to better understand bleisure tourists, in order to adapt tourism services for a more recreational *and* professional market.

The context of our study is individuals - Business Development Managers - who travel abroad to develop international business, advocating the globalization of learning (Robertson and Dale 2015) and fostering an international perspective within education (De Meyer 2012). These travelers provide an interesting unit of analysis given the emphasis on value created through international experience (European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture 2010). In this context, we attempt to address the following research question:

*How do travelers add leisure to business trips, and what motivates their behavior?*

Travel and tourism research can be based on “words, pictures, signs, symbols, film and images” (Stokes and Wall 2014, 186) to capture the complexity of the issues being studied. In travel research, the use of photo elicitation has been used parsimoniously (Stanczak 2007; Abascal, Fluker, and Jiang 2015) to capture visual nuances of data. The use of visual data in research is attracting increasing attention from scholars (e.g. Margolis and Pauwels 2011; Pink 2012; Rose 2012) as it can trigger memory and help evoke an emotional many-layered

response from participants (Samuels 2004) and bridge the attitude-behaviour gap. Given that “image-based research holds great potential for supplementing other forms of social knowledge that will strengthen, challenge, and contradict the way we understand the social world of ourselves and others” (Stanczak 2007, p.20), visual data is used in this study to illustrate and explain what motivates different types of bleisure travelers.

By exploring bleisure travelers, thus typifying the evolving travel landscape, we make a contribution to further the understanding of these unique types of tourists. The paper proceeds with a discussion of relevant literature, methods, data collection and analysis, results and discussion, before developing conclusions.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The motivation to ‘consume’ travel & tourism***

Motivations can be thought of as forces within individuals which cause them to fulfil a psychological desire or act in a specific goal-directed manner (Pearce and Lee, 2005). The impetus is often linked with the desire to engage with other like-minded people in social settings (Hoye and Lillis 2008) and to discover a different cultural milieu (Saltmarsh and Swirski 2010). Understanding tourist motivations is problematic due to the complexity and ambiguity of psychological factors, difficulties in measuring unobservable parameters and the lack of well-developed theory for travel motivation (Kluin and Letho 2012). Many frequently-cited theories of tourist motivation have been criticized for being outdated and no longer applicable in a globalized world (e.g. Leong et al. 2015; Whang, Yong, and Ko 2016; Chen, Mak and McKercher 2011). More specifically, there is a lack of underpinning theory that

explains what motivates different types of bleisure travelers - adept at combining business and leisure. One contribution of our study is to identify different types of bleisure travelers, based on their motivations to travel.

Theoretical frameworks or paradigms that underpin many studies of leisure tourism motivation include the frequently-cited *push-pull framework* (Crompton 1979; Leong et al. 2015; Whang, Yong, and Ko 2016). The theory suggests that most tourists travel as a result of being pushed by internal factors (Kim, Oh, and Jogaratnam 2007) and/or being pulled by a set of destination attributes (Correia, Kozak and Ferradeira, 2013; Yoon and Uysal 2005). More precisely, “push motivations are related with the emotional and internal desires such as self-actualization, rest, leisure or social interaction. In contrast, pull motivations are related with external and cognitive factors such as landscape, climate, hostility and facilities” (Correia et al. 2013, p.413).

Contrary to contractual mobility, many bleisure travelers *volunteer* (i.e. accept) to work abroad. Studies show that push factors (e.g. challenge, validating personal perceptions of a place, experiencing life in a foreign culture) and pull factors (e.g. escaping the daily routine to reorganizing, self-exploration) can influence volunteering to work overseas (Pan 2012). Altruistic factors motivate volunteer tourists (Paraskevaidis and Andriotis, 2017; Wang 2004; Ralston, Downward, and Limsdon 2004). Other frequently-cited theoretical frameworks for explaining tourist motives include Dann’s anomie and ego-enhancement theory (Dann 1977); Iso-Ahola’s escaping and seeking theory (1982); and the travel career ladder (Pearce 1988; Pearce and Lee 2005; Kutzman and Zauhar 2005). These theories vary according to their epistemologies regarding the factors that drive tourists to travel and the ability to measure



change over time (Chen et al. 2011). While the theories offer a broad-brush overview of tourism motivation in a number of specific leisure contexts, they are unable to provide holistic insights into bleisure.

***Theories of individual motives: from beyond the corpus of travel and tourism***

Given that extant travel and tourism literature fails to provide a structure for fully explaining the context of our study, we draw from other strands of literature to obtain a transversal view of bleisure. Research into experiential learning, for example, has mainly focused on formal education but could equally take place through bleisure. Experiential learning is a holistic process that draws out the learners' beliefs and ideas, and helps to resolve conflicts between opposing modes of reflection, action, feeling and thinking, creating synergy and knowledge (Kolb and Kolb 2005). Some travelers may be inspired and motivated by learning from experiencing travel and discovery; they enjoy having the opportunity to contemplate on the experience and to learn from it (Kolb 1984; Stone and Petrick 2013).

Research on SiE (e.g. Richardson 2006; Thorn 2009) also provides theoretical frameworks that may help explain the motivations for bleisure, given the self-initiated aspect of a trip. SiE denotes professionals who decide to undertake temporary work in another country (Howe-Walsh and Schyns 2010; Doherty, Richardson, and Thorne 2013). Scholars publishing in the field of career development and HRM have recognized the need for a multi-disciplinary approach linking management, psychology, migration, sociology, *inter alia* to understand SiE (e.g. Ariss, Koall, Ozbilgin and Sutari, 2013) - frequently driven by career development motives (e.g. Guo, Porshitz, and Alves 2013; Dickman et al. 2008). An individual's decision to work abroad is influenced not only by career development motives but also by personal

interests and values, family/partner considerations, culture and location (Dickman 2012).

However, wider leisure motives have not been the focus of SiE studies.

A comprehensive review of the expatriation and SiE literature is provided by Baruch, Altman and Tung (2016) who summarize key theoretical underpinnings. Of particular relevance to this study are three perspectives: boundary-less career theory, expectancy theory and social capital theory. Boundary-less career theory explains how occupational paths are not bounded within one organization, but involve a series of employment opportunities where individuals take charge of their careers (Arthur, 1994), and has been used to explain why individuals seek to work abroad (e.g. Guo, et al., 2013; Andresen, Biemann and Pattie 2015). The core of Vroom's (1964) expectancy motivation theory is the cognitive process of how individuals process motivational elements and the associations that people make towards expected outcomes. Expectancy motivation theory has been used to explain SiE and how individuals are motivated to expatriate themselves due to expectations of earning higher incomes, enjoying a better lifestyle, enriching their range of skills (language, cultural awareness, ICT) or a mixture of potential rewards or valences (e.g. Tharenou, 2003). Social capital theory (Li, 2002) helps explain relationships between individuals and organizations that facilitate action to create value (Hitt and Ireland, 2002; Barros 2006) by providing the individual with access to resources, not through their own inheritance or procurement, but through interaction with others (Lin, Cook, and Burt 2001). This interactivity - or networks of relations and the resources it brings to the individual - embraces “personal connections, enhanced knowledge and wherewithal and inside information” (Anderson, 2010, p. 3). Social capital theory has been used to help explain the linkages between expatriation career success and performance (e.g. Ramaswami, Carter, and Dreher 2016; Lui and Shaffer 2005) and may be pertinent for

exploring the motivations of bleisure travelers. For academics, research funding and publications are important for career trajectory and may be an indirect motivation for travelling abroad. Research can expand knowledge frontiers, increase scientific and human capital and result in increased recognition among peers (Cunningham, Mangematin, O’Kane and O’Reilly 2016). Publications in knowledge-transfer literature highlight how researchers can act as ‘boundary spanners’ between the private/public sector and the linchpin of transformation (O’Kane, Cunningham, Mangematin and O’Reilly 2015). By exploring generic leisure motives and SiE motives in this paper, we cross disciplinary boundaries and address a gap in the tourism and travel literature.

## **Methods**

Driven by a combination of business motives and leisure motives, in the context of this study bleisure travelers encompass university academics whose main purpose for traveling is to develop or build business partnerships with an overseas institution. In this context, bleisure travelers are unique in that their trip abroad is usually financed by work and that the international experience is likely to enhance career progression (Thorn 2009; Dickmann 2012), lifelong learning and research output (Webber and Yang 2014).

Photo-elicitation was used to identify generic motivations and types of bleisure travelers, since compared to other approaches, it can provide more concrete information, act as a trigger to memory and evoke a more emotional, many-layered response from participants (Samuels 2004). Photo-elicitation is increasingly used in social, cultural and historical research (Prosser and Loxley (2009) to prompt discussion, reflection and recollection with the participants, and to explore subjective meanings (Johnson and Weller 2002; Coulson, MacLaren, McKenzie

and O’Gorman 2014). The aim of using photos is two-fold: to promote more direct involvement of the informants in the research process, and to encourage and stimulate the collection of quantitatively and qualitatively different information, than that obtained from conventional interviews (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter and Phoenix 2008). Tourism researchers can use “photographs of people, places or cultural events to interpret people’s identity, experiences, motivation, sense of place and meanings” (Matteucci 2013, p.191). Personal photographs including those posted on social media provide a rich insight into bleisure motivations and typologies.

As little academic research has explored bleisure, an inductive approach was used in order to allow themes to emerge rather than ascribe data to existing theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clarke 2006). We adopted a four-phase exploratory multi-method qualitative research approach (Morse and Niehaus 2009), as follows:

Phase 1. Semi-structured personal interviews were conducted with bleisure travelers at their home institution. Taking inspiration from the work of Margolis and Pauwels (2011), Pink (2012), Rose (2012) and Koc and Boz (2014), the participants were asked (prior to the interview) to send photos/images that reflected their motivations for volunteering to travel abroad for work, or to bring photos/images to the interview. After providing a definition of bleisure travel and pre-screening participants to ensure they travelled for a combination of business and leisure purposes, four prompts were used during the interviews:

- (i) Tell me which of these photos best represents your motivation to undertake bleisure travel? And why?

- (ii) To what extent can you relate to the photos?
- (iii) What motivation is expressed in these photos?
- (iv) What types of bleisure traveler do you encounter at work (here and abroad)?

Phase 2. The verbatim results and photos from Phase 1 were presented to Directors of International Relations (DIR) and Key Account Managers (KAM) who were asked to comment on the motivations identified by the participants and, after reflection, use them as a basis for identifying different types of bleisure travelers. In the absence of an appropriate photo, they were asked to describe an image. To reduce bias, views were gathered from personnel at different hierarchical levels (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

Phase 3. The results from Phase 1 and 2 were presented to focus groups of academics to cross-validate and triangulate the findings (Kruger and Casey 2000). Triangulation helped to reduce the possibility of interviewer bias and respondent bias that is sometimes associated with qualitative interviews, and to increase the validity and reliability of the results (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2012). This approach allowed for more in-depth exploration and the emergence of new concepts not previously found in the academic literature (Saunders, Lyon, and Möllering 2015).

Phase 4. Finally, the data was shared with the initial interviewees to elicit validation or rectification. Given that bleisure travelers behave in unique and varied ways, the intention was to avoid over-generalization.

## **Data collection and analysis**

Data collection took place throughout 2016. Firstly, a snowball sampling technique was used; five staff (recommended by international KAM) were asked to identify potential respondents who had recently worked on business development activities overseas to participate in the study. Seventeen bleisure travelers were subsequently asked to participate in a personal interview. Copies of the interview questions (see Phase 1 above) were offered to the participants prior to the interviews. A summary of the profiles of the interviewees for Phase 1 is presented in table 1. Phase 2 involved eight senior managers (summary profiles are presented in table 2). The interviews lasted from 90 minutes to 2 hours, with an average of 87 minutes per interview.

***INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE***

***INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE***

In this study, the interviews were transcribed and manually sorted thematically using Template Analysis to generate a number of major and sub-themes (King and Horrocks 2010). Full and *equal* attention was given to each data item with the aim of identifying aspects that formed the basis of repeated patterns or themes. Colored highlighter pens were used to make notes on each transcript being analyzed and to indicate potential patterns or themes of data, which represent the factors that motivate bleisure travelers, paying attention to surrounding data to avoid losing context (Bryman 2001). Two additional researchers were invited to

analyze the transcripts independently in order to reduce potential interviewer bias while developing the factors.

During Phase 3, the preliminary results from Phase 1 and Phase 2 were presented to 4 focus groups (2 in France and 2 in UK). Each focus group consisted of 8 business development managers: a total of 16 men and 16 women aged from 21 to 66 years old.

## **Results and Discussion**

Acknowledging that there is no ‘standard’ type of bleisure traveler, our findings identified five distinct types (typologies) of travelers, each with different interests, motivations and personal circumstances – outlined in the following paragraphs. Each typology is illustrated with a photographic image (supplied by the participants), representing a snapshot of international bleisure travel and tourism. The photos reflect a greater focus on ‘pull’ factors than on ‘push’ factors.

### ***1. Experiential Learners***

*Experiential Learners* are often young managers or ‘early career’ researchers, looking to broaden their learning experience. Usually without children or dependents, *Experiential Learners* seek transformational experiences and opportunities to acquire new knowledge. For example:

“I both learn from and contribute to a fast-moving agenda; I get new ideas and I also see what might work and what might not work – or be appropriate for my institution ... ideas breed ideas” (interviewee profile no.1)

Working abroad is a prime mechanism for spreading ideas – in contrast to students enrolled on international mobility programs who seek a transformational experience (Clapp-Smith and Wernsing 2014; Stone and Petrick 2013). In the educational tourism literature, learning is recognized as a fundamental aspect of travel (Ritchie, Carr and Cooper 2003; Werry 2008). In contrast to other typologies, learning is a primary motivation for *Experiential Learners*. They have some parallels with theories developed in the travel and tourism literature: Stebbin’s (1982) concept of ‘serious leisure’ activities that result in the development of skills and knowledge; Pine and Glimore’s (1998) education experience realm; and Pearce and Lee’s (2005) notion of self-development. Major areas of learning associated with travel – including *Episteme* (Scientific Knowledge), *Techné* (Skill and crafts) and *Phronesis* (Wisdom) (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer and Benckendorff. 2012) – enable personal development. The motivations of *Experiential Learners* can be explained by experiential learning theory which describes the active and passive aspects of how experience, perception, cognition and behavior combine to create learning (Kolb 1984). This theory may provide a framework for understanding and evaluating bleisure travel learning, since a key aspect is reflection: a necessity for experiential learning. *Experiential Learners* have a life-long desire to learn from ‘doing’ (i.e. experiencing), in other words learning with and from others.

Equally constructive are the pedagogical consequences such as an evolution in an academic’s “angle of work by enabling lecturers to question their own work methods when confronted by



different teaching styles in a new international environment (KAM, France)”. Falk et al. (2012) highlight how learning is an important but neglected area of travel research and that, in future, vacationers will increasingly search for personal development, transformative experiences and cultural engagement.

Developing or enhancing cultural awareness is fundamental for *Experiential Learners*:

“For me, personally, it is about developing my ‘inter-cultural competences’ – and these skills can only be fully acquired by undertaking regular work abroad, through ‘total immersion’ ... not by reading a book as a substitute for experiencing it” (interviewee profile no.3).

***INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE***

## ***2. Escapers***

Within tourism literature, the concept of traveling to escape from the routine is widely recognized in benchmark studies such as Iso-Ahola’s escaping and seeking theory (1982); Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) escape experience realm; and Crompton’s (1979) escape from a perceived mundane environment/break from routine. *Escapers* include bleisure travelers who feel “I get bored if I stay at home too long” (interviewee profile no.11) and believe that “travelling is always a great opportunity to escape with many unknown outcomes!” (interviewee profile no.8).

The notion that tourists volunteer to escape from their everyday lives (Lo and Lee 2011) is also relevant for escapers:

“There is always an exotic side to international mobility that most individuals would enjoy, joined with the idea of leaving the campus and usual routine ... to see or do something unusual in a different place with different people” (KAM, France).

*Escapers* often seek autonomy, identified by Pearce and Lee (2005) as a motivator for vacationers. In the same way that students are attracted by Study Abroad opportunities to escape, develop self-identity and gain autonomy from parents (Liping, Wei, Lu and Day 2015), employees are motivated by the opportunity to seek autonomy from a spouse/partner, children or colleagues:

“By travelling abroad to work, I get a break from juggling family and work; being abroad actually creates time for me as I have evenings/weekends free” (interviewee profile no.4).

***INSERT FIG 2&3 HERE***

### ***3. Working Vacationers***

Our findings suggest that bleisure travelers are often stereotyped as holidaymakers, motivated by the leisure factors that are widely described in existing travel literature (cf. Chen et al. 2011; Pearce and Lee 2005; Crompton 1979). For all but one typology, taking a vacation while abroad is not a top priority; however *Working Vacationers* actively seek to take advantage of the opportunity to combine work and pleasure, while still respecting their professional obligations:

“When people see photos of us working abroad they think we are having a jolly but in reality we are working long hours – then fitting in leisure” (interviewee profile no.9).

“I like to combine my international work with skiing or climbing, but still work incredibly hard while I am there” (interviewee profile no.10).

*Working Vacationers* are often “early-career or late-career, child-free internationally mobile individuals who want to travel ... to work, have fun and enjoy themselves” (DIR, France).

*Working vacationers* can be characterized by the tangible and intangible outcomes in their “work hard, play hard approach to travelling while on business” (DIR, UK). Tangible outcomes typically include “a measured increase in skills acquisition for example foreign language qualification”; intangible outcomes could include “raised awareness of the work-life balance in a different culture” (interviewee profile no.13). The observation “an easy life of sightseeing, partying and spending the *per diem* in fancy restaurants” (KAM, UK) clashes with the reality “it can be fun, for sure...but it’s tough when you have to get up at 2am to catch a flight on a Sunday morning in sub-zero temperatures, and live out of a suitcase for a week – without family, friends or home comforts” (KAM, France).

#### **INSERT FIG 4 & 5 HERE**

#### **4. *Altruistic Knowledge Sharers***

*Altruistic Knowledge Sharers* are mainly senior academics, eager to share knowledge while travelling. Often end-of-career academics, they have fewer commitments and obligations at their home institution and are interested in (and enjoy) sharing their life’s experience. Their

satisfaction stems from the opportunity to tell others about their research and international exploits; a largely intangible outcome. Some of the motivations for this type of bleisure traveler – such as altruism, engagement and willingness – are described in the volunteer tourism literature (e.g. Wang 2004; Ralston et al. 2004; Pan 2012; Alexander, Kim and Kim 2015); Paraskevaidis and Andriotis, 2017) but in a different context. *Altruistic Knowledge Sharers* are likely to have reached a stage of self-actualization and fulfilment; they are at the higher end of Pearce and Lee’s (2005) travel career ladder.

***INSERT FIG 6 & 7 HERE***

The desire for the *Altruistic Knowledge Sharer* to create debate is echoed in the comments raised:

“There is another type – often elderly or semi-retired – who wish to share their knowledge and experience with the younger generation, for the joy of exchanging ideas ... passionate ... they really want to make a difference and make the effort to go somewhere new and broaden the minds of the people around them” (KAM, France).

### ***5. Research-Active Trailblazers***

*Research-Active Trailblazers* can be described as “career-builders, looking for professional career advancement through publishing research in ranked journals” (KAM, UK). During an overseas visit, *Research-Active Trailblazers* use their free time to intensively network and collaborate, targeting spare time and opportunities for undertaking high quality publications

and research bids. Such motivations drive career development and have been shown to be of considerable importance in the SiE and HRM literature (e.g. Doherty et al. 2013) and knowledge-transfer publications (e.g. Cunningham et al. 2015) but are not adequately explained by leisure travel theories. Social capital theory partly explains how the relationships between individual *Research-Active Trailblazers* and the organization where they work facilitate action and create value (Hitt and Ireland 2002) through the connections or social networks among individuals (Barros 2006). For *Research-Active Trailblazers*, working abroad is a means to an end, since it can engender a tangible outcome that may be materially rewarding, professionally productive and result in opportunities for lucrative additional work or funding:

“Visits to partner institutions lead to collaboration and publishing opportunities – I’ve made many international contacts which have resulted in profitable ventures, joint research, publishing, business collaboration and funding bids” (interviewee profile no.6).

*Research-Active trailblazers* are inspired to work abroad to enhance their reputation and CV by building an international profile. In the context of this study, they stand out from other types of bleisure travelers in their enthusiasm to achieve self-imposed goals for personal or professional gain. Thus, a *Research-Active Trailblazer* is likely to be involved in the wider academic community, in extra-curricular activities and in institutional life. In this sense, boundary-less career theory (Arthurs 1994) also explains some of the physical and psychological boundary-crossing factors that drive *Research-Active Trailblazers*. However, unlike other studies that draw upon boundary-less career theory to study longer-term expatriation and repatriation (e.g. Guo et al. 2013; Andresen et al.2015), our bleisure travelers

work temporarily in a 'host' institution for a short period of time while remaining employed by their 'home' institution.

***INSERT FIGURE 8 HERE***

### **Concluding comments**

Little academic research has been undertaken in the bleisure travel market, despite the size of this growing sector. Extant literature provides an incomplete picture of the processes and implications of bleisure travel, and in the context of this study, reveals a lack of consensus about the combination of business and leisure motives that drive individuals to volunteer for travelling abroad to work. Based on the results photo-elicitation, interviews with 25 bleisure travelers and focus groups conducted with a further 32 individuals, our findings confirm many of the overarching ideas in the leisure tourism literature concerning motivations to travel. The notion of escaping (Iso-Ahola 1982; Pearce and Lee 2005); the 'escape' experience (Pine and Gilmore 1999); the pursuit of freedom (Dann 1977); the break from the routine, exploring/evaluating self, relaxing, prestige, building relationships, social interaction, novelty and education (Crompton 1979) were key motivators for particular types of travelers. Furthermore, many existing theories of tourist motivation can be criticized for focusing solely on leisure, and therefore seem outdated and irrelevant in a globalizing world where bleisure travel is increasingly commonplace. The international mobility literature offers a selection of fragmented theories divided by various disciplinary boundaries (Massey et al. 2006) that explain motivations for engaging in working abroad – but overlooks international bleisure travel. For this reason, we draw from international HRM, SiE, knowledge-transfer and international management to explain the blurring of boundaries between business and leisure travel, while acknowledging the transversal aspect of expectancy theory.

Our results identify 5 types of bleisure travelers that reflect the complex dynamics that motivate bleisure travelers. The findings also reveal that in the context of this study, international travel is associated with a distinct type of tourism (Rodríguez, Martínez-Roget, and Pawlowska 2012) in which tourists act as linchpins and boundary spanners. At an individual level, the act of transiently experiencing new places and new situations can be extremely enriching (Ryan 2002). At an institutional level, both the sending and receiving institutions can benefit from the exchange of knowledge and cultural insight, showcasing the international dimension and reinforcing the market position, ranking and accreditation (Dickmann 2012; Ernst and Young 2014). Bleisure travelers are motivated by the tangible, intangible, push and pull factors that motivate each typology: for example, thirst for new skills (*Flexible Adaptable Learners*), adventure (*Escapers*), novelty (*Working Vacationers*), knowledge-transfer (*Altruistic Knowledge Sharers*), research/ funding partnerships (*Research-Active Trailblazers*).

Our findings offer constructive insights into the motivations of these travelers and, furthermore, provide important implications for managers, policy makers and service providers. Given that bleisure constitutes an important part of the international business travel market, an awareness and understanding of bleisure travel and tourism is essential for managers and policymakers. Lessons can be learnt from identifying the motives of the different types of bleisure tourists. Each typology of bleisure traveler has different motivating factors, often linked to personal circumstances. International mobility has numerous benefits (Severt, Wang, Chen and Breiter 2007; Saltmarsh and Swirski 2010) and therefore should be embedded into the workplace. The development of effective marketing communication

strategies (targeting engagement in working abroad) should involve segmented plans that focus on the tangible, intangible, push and pull factors that motivate each typology. For example, marketing communication for encouraging *Flexible Adaptable Learners* could highlight the positive challenges and the benefits gained from developing new transformational skills. By contrast, attention should focus on adventure and risk for *Escapers*. *Working Vacationers* are likely to respond positively to messages emphasizing socio-cultural discovery, resembling the conventional tourist market. *Altruistic Knowledge Sharers* would be interested in learning about opportunities to transmit and exchange knowledge. Potential for research collaboration and joint funding applications would appeal to *Research-Active Trailblazers*. In other business contexts, different types of bleisure travelers may exist, requiring managers to adopt different approaches to stimulate work-related travel, if it benefits the company.

The results of our study also provide implications for tourism service providers. Bleisure travelers who are adept at combining elements of business and leisure need smart products and services designed for their modern blurred lifestyles (WEF, 2016). Many hotels and service providers recognize the importance of this market and provide incentives for travelers to extend their stay for personal interests during business trips and for leisure-oriented pursuits. However, many business-focused travel agencies that provide corporate bookings do not always offer the customized niche services that bleisure travelers seek, such as opportunities to book a city excursion, visit the opera, ski touring etc.

Given that most bleisure travelers have busier schedules than traditional leisure travelers, there is a need to compartmentalize when required. Some of the typologies identified in this



study, such as *Escapers* and *Working Vacationers*, are likely to be found in any sector where employees have an opportunity to travel internationally for business; these travelers should be targeted by service providers. Other typologies such as *Altruistic Knowledge Sharers* and *Research-Active Trail Blazers* will be more specific to a life-long learning context and therefore form a niche sector. A better understanding of the unique needs and desires of other bleisure travelers will enable service providers to customize specialist travel services such as multiple-entry visa and inoculations for several destinations during one trip.

There are four main limitations of our study. Firstly it focused on international travel for business development activities in a learning environment, rather than on generic ‘corporate travelers’ who undertake internationally business trips and incorporate leisure activities into their visit. Snowball sampling was used to identify bleisure travelers from a modest number of institutions; therefore care must be taken in extrapolating and generalizing the findings to the wider community. Secondly, the findings were heavily weighted towards understanding working mobility in developed economies. This understanding may not apply in other settings since motivation is influenced by cultural as well as personal and professional drivers. Thirdly, the data were interpreted through an Anglo-Saxon cultural lens, concentrating on European bleisure travelers. Lastly, our focus was on business development, rather than on other forms of international travel such as sabbaticals, international conference attendance or training courses. Despite these limitations, we contribute to existing literature by providing novel insights, using photo-elicitation to visually gain a broad understanding of contemporary bleisure travelers.

Further research is needed: to understand the changing landscape of tourism, keep pace with the evolution of tourist motives and better understand the impact of barriers to bleisure travel.

From a management perspective, additional research could compare the motivations of bleisure travelers who travel as a result of contractual obligation (a push factor) with those who travel as a result of self-initiated mobility (pull factors). Another angle to consider is the traveler 'experience'. Quantitative research could be conducted to measure the importance of motivators, and to cross-validate the typologies identified here. A longitudinal analysis of how motivations evolve over time would provide useful insights, for example, into the extent to which bleisure travelers may migrate from one typology to another as they age and move further up the travel career ladder. Our study could be extended to different cultures, corporate sectors or less-developed countries. Research could be undertaken on the role played by destination or place in influencing the decision of a bleisure traveler to visit a particular location.

The present study reflects an emerging phenomenon in bleisure travel within the context of an industry facing turbulence and global competition. Bleisure travel epitomizes the increasingly multi-cultural/ multi-ethnic scope of contemporary travel. Managers would be advised to understand the motivations of these tourists, in order to adapt tourism services for a more recreational and professional market. We believe that bleisure travel can be a lucrative and sustainable activity; in the same way that business travelers can be considered as 'engines of innovation' (Hovhannisyan and Keller 2015), bleisure travelers can act as transformational knowledge transmitters and convey examples of best practice in teaching and research. The adage '*Les voyages forment la jeunesse*' ('travel broadens the mind') has never been truer.

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