

BINGE TOURISM / VISITING: ESSENCE AND CORRELATES

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Abstract: *Binge tourism / visiting refers to travellers / tourists attempting to see as much as possible in a very short period. Very popular among people who have little free time for travel, it comes with the price of the inability to truly create meaningful relationships, enjoy the experience, and taste local culture. The paper approaches four main aspects related to this type of tourism – the essence of binge tourism / visiting, the Florence / Stendhal Syndrome, binge flying, and the importance of meaningful tourism experiences.*
Keywords: *binge tourism / visiting, Stendhal Syndrome, binge flying, positive effects, negative effects, meaningful tourism experience*

INTRODUCTION

The phrase binge tourism / visiting (“a phenomenon where travelers attempt to see as much as possible in a very short time” – Abortivi, 2021) completes a series of phrases containing the term binge “a period of excessive indulgence in an activity, especially eating, drinking, or taking drugs” (Oxford Languages): binge buying / shopping “the unrestrained and often excessive indulgence in buying” (Merriam-Webster), binge drinking “the consumption of an excessive amount of alcohol in a short period of time” (Oxford Languages) which fathered binge drinking tourism (Csizmady et al., 2018), binge eating “[the consumption of] large quantities of food very quickly, even when not hungry, and to the point of being uncomfortable” (Scott, 2023), binge flying “excessive (tourist) air travel” (Cohen, Higham & Cavaliere, 2011, 2) or “frequent flying” (Young, Higham & Reis, 2014, 56), binge mobility “mobility caused by the excessive consumption of tourism” (Urry, 2010, in Cohen, Higham & Cavaliere, 2011, 2; and Higham, Cohen & Cavaliere, 2014, 468; Marin Diana et al., 2015; Marin Diana et

all, 2013; Petroman I. et al, 2012; Petroman I. et al, 2010; Petroman I. et al, 2013; Petroman I. M. & Văduva Loredana, 2021), and binge watching “the practice of watching multiple episodes of a television programme in rapid succession, typically by means of DVDs or digital streaming” (Oxford Languages). As for binge smoking, it refers to “people who overdose on nicotine once or twice a week but do not otherwise smoke” (Warning on Binge Smoking Danger, 2003).

These phrases share two ideas: excessiveness through words and phrases such as “as much as possible,” “excessive amount,” “excessive consumption,” “excessive indulgence,” “excessive travel,” “large quantities,” “multiple episodes,” “unrestrained indulgence;” and rapidity through words and phrases such as “in a short period of time,” “in a very short time,” “in rapid succession,” “very quickly.” Binge smoking suggests only excessiveness (“overdose”). This paper presents the effects of excessiveness and rapidity on tourists and tourist authentic experience (Petroman I.M. et al, 2015; Popa Daniela et al, 2010; Rață Georgeta et al, 2013; Ristea I. et al, 2018; Văduva Loredana et al, 2018; Văduva Loredana & Petroman Cornelia, 2017).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The material analysed in this paper consists in a small number of articles on binge tourism / visiting. The research methods used in the paper are the lexicographical method (necessary to clarify the definition of binge tourism / visiting and the other compounds with “binge”) and the analytical method (necessary to analyse the effects of binge tourism / visiting).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The essence of binge tourism / visiting. This type of tourism involving visiting multiple tourism attractions or destinations in a short period is no novelty. The idea appeared in 1925, in *The Café de la Paix*, a revue sketch in which three American tourists have the following dialogue (Coward, 1931):

Mrs Hammaker: Are we in Paris or Brussels, Harry?

Harry: What day of the week is it?

Irma: Thursday.

Harry: We are in Paris.

In 1957, they published a cartoon in the *New Yorker*, in which a female tourist exclaims with frustration:

“But if it’s Tuesday, it has to be Siena!”

In 1965, they released a documentary on such tour on CBS television. In 1969, United Artists released the movie *If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium!* The movie presents a group of Americans on whirlwind 9-countries-in-18-days sightseeing tours of Europe. The tourists go to London (Great Britain), Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Brussels and Bastogne (Belgium), Rhineland-Palatinate by boat on the Rhine from Koblenz to Wiesbaden (Germany), Geneva (Switzerland), and Venice and Rome (Italy). In 1987, they produced a remake, a made-for-TV movie, *If It's Tuesday, It Still Must Be Belgium!* No matter the artistic genre, the idea is still the same: while this approach allows tourists / travellers / visitors to check off their “to-do” list, it can leave them exhausted and overwhelmed because the focus becomes quantity over quality, and the richness of each experience is lost.

This can also happen in a single country such as Italy (with its “must see” cities Florence, Milan, Pisa, Rome, or Venice, and its 58 UNESCO World Heritage Sites); in a single tourist area such as the French Riviera (France) (Cannes, Èze, Nice, Saint Jean Cap Ferrat, Saint Paul de Vence, Villefranche-sur-Mer) combined with Monte Carlo (the administrative area of the Principality of Monaco, a city-state and microstate) or Cinque Terre (Italy); or in a single city such as Florence (Italy).

When in Monaco, tourists / visitors will find it difficult to choose between the numerous attractions there: Apotheosa Monaca, Chapel of the Sainte-Dévote, Chapel of Visitation, Chocolaterie, Épingle de la Rascasse, Exotic Garden, Fontvieille Harbour, Fontvieille Park and Princess Grace Rose Garden, Hector Berlioz Statue, Hercules Harbour, Japanese Gardens, Larvotto Beach, Liberation Monument, Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology, Napoleon Museum, Naval Museum, New National Museum, Notre-Dame-Immaculée Cathedral, Oceanographic Museum, Palace Guards, Palace of Justice, Prince's Palace, Private Collection of Antique Cars of H.S.H. Prince Rainier III, Saint Charles Church, Saint Martin and Sainte Barbe Gardens, Saint Paul's Church, and the Zoo. Or, attempting at seeing / visiting / touring at least the most important of these attractions in one or two days would be an excellent example of binge tourism!

Florence / Stendhal / Stendhal's Syndrome. Psychiatrist Graziella Magherini studied foreign tourists (with a chain of personal events) visiting Florence and found that 66% of them had dominant though disorders, 29% had dominant disorders, and 5% had panic attacks or somatic projections of anxiety (Guerrero, Barceló Rosselló & Ezpeleta, 2010). The researcher named this psychic discomfort Stendhal Syndrome due to the French writer's experience when visiting the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence

(Italy), a psychosomatic condition involving confusion, dizziness, fainting, hallucinations, and rapid heartbeat. For instance, one could get confused when binge visiting Italy where one can jump in time from the ancient Roman Empire times to the Middle Ages and Renaissance and to 17th and 18th century history. In their turn, Guerrero, Barceló Rosselló & Ezpeleta (2010) conducted a study to evaluate similar conditions in a homogeneous group of 48 travellers (27-67 years of age; 1.7 males: 1 females) in touch with art objects during a trip to Italy. The respondents' mood was 73% tranquil, 21% restless, and 6% anxious. As for the sensations (positive and negative feelings) attributable to the aesthetic experience of Florence, Padua, Rome, and Venice, 83% indicated aesthetic pleasure, 62% – emotion, 33% – euphoria, 10% – slight alterations of perception, 10% – slight feeling of inadequacy, 8% – omnipotent thoughts, 6% – slight unpleasant somatic (“relating to the body, especially as distinct from the mind” – Oxford Languages) symptoms, 4% – slight feeling of guilt, and 4% – slight sensation of precariousness. According to Magherini (Guerrero, Barceló Rosselló & Ezpeleta, 2010), “artistic enjoyment” (“a complex of psychological responses generated in an observer by a work of art, with no other interests than the purely artistic” – idem, 354) includes three variables (primary aesthetic experience, strangeness, and selected fact) and one constant (artistic value “the art object with its own characteristics, its content or symbolism”). This explains why binge tourism / visiting can have negative impacts on tourists' / visitors' condition.

Binge Flying. Binge flying – a term coined in 2007 by Hill (Cohen, Higham & Cavaliere, 2011, 2) – is considered a behavioural addiction clearly associated with climate change: overproduction leads to overconsumption, i.e., people having nothing to do over the weekend purely and simply jump on a plane to go somewhere because they can afford it. This is why encouraging positive public behaviour change is seen as a pathway for mitigating the climate impacts of air travel. Unfortunately, there are two sociological barriers to developing sustainable discretionary air travel behaviour: the gap between attitudes and behaviour and the gap between “practices of home and away.” Cohen, Higham & Reis (2013) conducted a study to deeper understand why these gaps occur in the context of tourism spaces, and found that “tourism spaces are often subject to lower levels of environmental concern than daily domestic contexts”. Thus, most participants reduce, suppress, or abandon their climate concern when in tourism spaces, and only a minority held there is no difference between the environmental sustainability of their practices in domestic situations versus those on hol-

iday. The solution would be a stronger intervention, i.e., policies aiming at reducing air travel's climate impacts. Both binge flying and binge mobility are considered attempts "to locate the environmental problems associated with air travel in the excessive appetites of individual consumers" (Young, Higham & Reis, 2014, 55). Higham, Cohen & Cavaliere (2014, 462) presented a comparative analysis of attitudes towards climate change and discretionary air travel, providing insights into areas of convergence and divergence across Europe and documenting evidence of widespread neglect of the "flyers' dilemma", i.e., of "the tension that now exists between the personal benefits of tourism and the climate concerns associated with high levels of personal aeromobility". According to Higham et al. (2016), tourism is the main "culprit" as an environmentally destructive industry because of the greenhouse gas emissions associated with tourist mobility (i.e., binge mobility). To encourage public behaviour change, interventions to transport, and environmental behaviour (i.e., to make people use other means of locomotion than airplanes, social marketing (which targets consumers as active participants in the processes of social change to educate them, to develop a social movement of consumers against the food industry's marketing, and to lobby for increased governance), nudge (which reconfigures physical environments by preserving the people's freedom of choice while steering them towards behaviour that tackles particular social problems – binge drinking, binge eating, excessive smoking, and climate change), and regulation for behavioural change (through dramatic reductions in the number of vehicles in city centres, personal carbon budgets, taxation aimed at making flying more expensive to reflect its environmental impacts) are popular persuasive devices.

The importance of meaningful tourism experiences. A meaningful experience does not involve rushing through a checklist. It involves allowing experiences to shape oneself; appreciating local nuances; creating memories by connecting with people; creating relationships that make one personally grow; enjoying the trip / travel / visit; forming connections; immersing oneself in local life; interacting with the locals, their everyday life, and peculiarities; participating in cultural activities; savouring the unique aspects of each place; sightseeing; and tasting the local culture. According to Câmara et al. (2023, 11), several constructs are considered synonyms of meaningful tourism experience depending on the type of tourism practiced: authentic experience, consumer experience, creative tourism experience, cultural tourism experience, heritage tourism experience, individual tourist experience, memorable tourism experience, pilgrimage experience,

restorative personal meaningful travel experience, rural tourism experience, spiritual tourism experience, therapeutic experience, travel experience and wellness tourism experience. A tourist experience can be authentic (constructive, existential, objective, or postmodern), extraordinary (intrinsically enjoyable, positively intense, transformative), memorable (retained in the tourist's memory and helping to reinforce the recollection of pleasurable episodes), and/or transformational (associated with self-realisation and self-exploration leading to an individual's inner transformation in beliefs, intentions, self-perceptions, and values). These four types of tourist experience share four common features: emotional development, focus on the social dimension, personal dimension, and search for wellbeing. Câmara et al. (2023, 12) define meaningful tourism experience as “a unique path to building tourists' sense of self, confidence, empowerment and transformation”, in which meaningful refers to the experiences that enable emotions, self-identity, and self-reflection, and provides opportunities for excitement, flexibility, and learning. Or, binge tourism / visiting cannot provide any of these elements.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis above:

- The phrase binge tourism / visiting has enriched a list of “binge” phrases: binge buying / shopping, binge drinking, binge eating, binge flying, binge mobility, binge watching, and binge smoking;
- The concept of binge tourism / visiting is 100 years old;
- Binge tourism / visiting is closely related to binge flying, binge mobility, and binge drinking tourism;
- “Binge” phrases are characterised by excessiveness and rapidity;
- The essence of binge tourism / visiting (inability to truly create meaningful relationships, enjoy the experience, and taste local culture), the Florence / Stendhal Syndrome (a negative effect of binge tourism / visiting), binge flying (closely intertwined with binge tourism / visiting and binge mobility), and the importance of meaningful tourism experiences (related to creative thinking, motivations, and the personal characteristics of tourists) are the main features of binge tourism / visiting;
- The negative effects of binge tourism / visiting weigh from far more than its positive effects.

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