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Tourism and Exoticism: The ‘Zoo Syndrome’ Effect in Next-Gen Travelers

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Abstract

Tourism as a human activity not only constructs its Others but also wants to strongly know this otherness. This implies that both in large cities and in the most remote cultures, exoticism signifies at the same time a push factor and a pull factor for next-gen travelers. Considering that Generation Z began planning their trips online (e.g., brand websites, online travel agencies, blogs, and video platforms), the search for the experience of the exotic plays an important role. As a result, the ‘zoo syndrome’ is not a phenomenon that is only found in non-Western cultures and third world countries. It also appears in contemporary Western societies. Thus, exoticism will be considered as an *operative function* and not as a concept bound to a particular time and space. In the same way, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1993) considered the Baroque as “an operative function” and not as a particular historical period. Nevertheless, the domestic ‘zoo syndrome’ has certain differences with the original concept designed by Jost Krippendorf (1987). This chapter develops an original proposal of how to rethink this notion associated with next-gen travelers.

Keywords: tourism anthropology, exoticism, zoo syndrome, next-gen travelers, otherness

1. Introduction

One of the characteristics of tourism as a human activity is the construction of its ‘Others’ [1, 2]. Nonetheless, tourism not only constructs its ‘Others’ but also produces the search and desire for the knowledge of that ‘otherness’ [3]. This is basically due to the fact that “tourism is a special form of ‘gaze’ constructing the other” [4]. Thus, it is not possible to separate, the construction of the ‘Other’ and, the tourist’s gaze. This remark has been demonstrated by Urry [5]. In the first pages of *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, Urry [5] asserts that “we gaze at what we encounter.” This implies that the tourist’s gaze ends up constructing an ‘otherness’ in tourist activity. As Lynda Johnston [1] concluded, tourism “constructs ‘Others.’” Notwithstanding, “there is no single tourist gaze as such,” due to the fact that “it varies by society, by social group and by historical period” [5]. Beyond the particularity of each society and historical period, tourism from its origins has constructed its ‘others’.

This is made up of a wide range of aspects that include motivations, behaviors, culture, the tourist destination, among other components. Therefore, it is critical to study “how the process of ‘Othering’ takes place” [6]. Specifically, “the tourist gaze is a concept that attempts to articulate the travel motivations and behaviors of tourists” [7]. Therefore, the ‘exotic Other’ can be geographically and culturally distant as well as close to us. This premise constitutes the main thesis of the chapter.

Similarly, the gaze of the local also plays a role, shaping a kind of dialectic of the gaze. This particular topic has been analyzed by Maoz [2]. As explained by Maoz [2], “the tourist and local gazes exist, affecting and feeding each other, resulting in what is termed ‘the mutual gaze.’” Despite this, research on the different perspectives of the tourist has prevailed in tourism studies over the local’s point of view [8]. Likewise, in the field of anthropology, the gaze of travelers, tourists, and explorers in relation to other cultures was also dominant. This attitude was criticized by Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his famous opening sentence to *Tristes Tropiques*: “I hate travelling and explorers” [9]. Undoubtedly, the ironic phrase with which Lévi-Strauss begins his memoir was aimed at thwarting the “exotic tourist sights” [10]. Indeed, the process of exoticizing a geographically and culturally distant ‘Other’ immediately became a tourist phenomenon. This desire to know and experience the exotic ended up installing an asymmetrical relationship between tourists and locals [11]. Following Brendan Canavan’s [7] reading of Maoz approach, “where the tourist gaze may be directed towards the locals, another gaze, that of the local, is directed towards the guest simultaneously.” The dialectic of the gaze between tourists and locals shapes what Jost Krippendorf called the ‘zoo syndrome’ or the exoticism of the visited [3]. Thus, the unequal relationship between tourists and locals—cultural, linguistic, economic—is basically due to the notion that “absolutely nothing is shared and where roles are so totally different, no meaningful dialogue can take place” [3]. Nevertheless, this syndrome not only persists in relation to non-Western cultures (geographically and culturally distanced) but also exists within contemporary Western societies.

1.1 The proximal ‘other’

One of the first researchers to point out the importance of doing ethnography in one’s own country was the anthropologist Augé [12]. Thus, the French anthropologist proposes to relativize the classical difference between the *same* and the *Other* in the anthropological field. Having simply a relational and methodological value, the study of ‘otherness’ refers to a double anthropology: one linked directly to the immediate environment of the researcher, and the other mediated by the cultural, social, and geographical distance of the observer. This new methodological perspective within contemporary anthropology has allowed him to note the existence of “the proximal Other, or the Other next door” [12]. In the same way, Clifford [13] in the early 1990s indicated “the recent return of anthropology to the metropolis.” Beyond this paradigm shift, the traditional ethnography of non-Western cultures continues.

In the field of tourism studies, beginning the 1990s, reflect on the pursuit for the exotic also began to emerge in the main capitals of the Western world. This trend has its explanation—to a great extent—in the growth of urban tourism. Considering that urban tourism is “referred to as tourism in towns and cities” [14], internal exoticism is part of one of the attractions. One example can be the growing interest in exotic food and adventurous meals by next-gen travelers. In other words, millennials and Generation Z tourists are flocking to restaurants where they can enjoy exotic dishes as stated by De la Barre and Brouder [15], the “worldwide desire for exposure to foreign

(exotic) foods even in familiar locations.” Another example could be the curiosity aroused in next-gen travelers by hip-hop street shows in some US cities. Following the analysis carried out by Xie et al. [4], “hip-hop tourism begins with the initial gaze by tourists attracted through the curiosity about the other.”

To sum up, not only in the anthropological field and in the tourist studies the existence of a proximate Other has been noted but also in the literary field. An example of this is the literary analysis developed by the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas about the work of Marcel Proust [16]. Focusing on a passage of a French writer's novel, Levinas unveils the strange desire for the knowledge of the Other. In the character of Albertine, Proust embodies a set of desires, curiosities, and exoticisms. Through the meetings and misunderstandings of this literary character, the French writer represents the riddle of 'otherness' and his desire for knowledge. Based on a literary and philosophical analysis, Levinas [16] concludes the “insatiable curiosity about the alterity of the Other” throughout the work of Marcel Proust.

2. From foreign to domestic 'zoo syndrome'

The attraction for the exotic traits of non-Western cultures has existed since before the twentieth century [17]. However, it is with the emergence of mass tourism—linked to the technological possibilities of reaching remote places—this search intensifies. As McCabe [18] points out, “mass tourism was driven by a romantic interest for the distant, exotic, pristine nature and a desire to escape a suffocating and confining modern social reality.” For this reason, a number of authors in the early 1990s began to study this phenomenon. As a result, an extensive literature has been accumulating within tourism studies that focuses on the analysis of the *pull factors* of the exotic. This long-standing phenomenon was coined by Krippendorf [3] as the 'zoo syndrome'. According to Krippendorf [3]:

“Conditions for an inter-cultural dialogue are even less favourable when the rich travel to the countries of the poor... Visitors to the Third World and natives belong not only to different cultures but to different social classes...What should have been a meeting becomes a 'zoo syndrome', in which both sides gape at each other. The native becomes an exhibit to be photographed. There is also the language barrier.”

In other words, the asymmetrical nature of encounters between tourists and locals in peripheral countries ends up shaping a kind of fetishism or curiosity for the way of life of the Others, a kind of exoticism of the local. This eagerness for the knowledge of non-traditional lifestyles by tourists has been described by various authors. For instance, in the Tonga Islands, traditional Polynesia, most of the natives do not tolerate being seen as part of a “cultural zoo” [11]. Another example is the case of the bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. They have sometimes told researchers that they do not like to be treated as “animals in a circus” [19]. They have not only felt part of a 'human zoo' but have also been treated as wild animals.

Similarly, Hunter [20] demonstrated that encounters between tourists and local people are marked by mistrust. Basically, this is due to the transitory and superficial nature of encounters between tourists and locals [21]. As Hunter [20] described, tourists walk around in their glass case observing the Other as an exotic unknown. This ends up generating depersonalization of the individual. In fact, they seek to find in the 'exotic Other' the image they saw in magazines. In the same way, Said [22]

demonstrated how Western culture constructed an exotic image of the middle East. Although he does not use the concept designed by Krippendorf [3], conceptually he is proposing the same phenomenon. Following Said's [22] conclusion, the West created "the Orient as an essentially exotic, distant, and antique place."

Nevertheless, tourist attraction to exoticism not only takes place itself with regard to non-Western cultures (geographically and culturally distant) but also develops within modern societies. Certainly, there is an inner or domestic exoticism in contemporary societies. One of the authors who has noted the need for the construction of an 'exotic Other' in modern societies has been Clifford [13]. To him, this 'otherness' is not constructed in relation to an external Other but arises within a culture. As Clifford ([13], p. 272) asserted, "a modern culture continuously constitutes itself through its ideological constructs of the exotic." In the same way, Augé [12] pointed out the existence of an internal exoticism in contemporary European societies. Augé [12] called this new phenomenon "intimate exoticism."

2.1 The domestic 'zoo syndrome'

This kind of exoticism (typical of modern societies) manifests itself in different realms of culture. For this reason, contemporary societies have gone from experiencing an asymmetric and vertical exoticism to a transversal and multicultural exoticism. This passage is due to various socio-cultural factors. Notwithstanding, the so-called traditional 'zoo syndrome' has not disappeared. The desire to experience the exotic faraway continues in the field of international tourism. That is, travel by traditional tourists and millennials to culturally and geographically distant (exotic) countries continues to take place. On the other hand, the search for the exotic in today's Western societies is beginning to acquire more and more followers every day due to the diversity of the tourist offer.

This new experience of the exotic ends up shaping a domestic 'zoo syndrome'. Nonetheless, this new notion has some traits different from the original. First, it is an *internal* and not an external exoticism. Secondly, it is characterized by being transversal and multicultural. Thirdly, it transcends the tourist activity, developing also in everyday life. Finally, it has had its genesis in Western societies since the 1980s. This does not signify that there are not some previous cases, but it is from this period when the first tourist offers related to this subject begin to emerge [23]. Clearly, this means that the focus of tourist attraction is placed on the different types of urban tourism. It is no longer about the Western millennials who travels to remote places to encounter the exotic.

Of course, being characterized as transversal and multicultural, the domestic 'zoo syndrome' is to a large extent the result of migration processes. This was recognized by Bhabha [24]. To Bhabha [24], today's migration flows produce "the exoticism of the 'diversity' of cultures." Therefore, since some decades ago, populations of different ethnic groups have begun to coexist in the large cities of the West. The cultural diversity triggers internal exoticization processes due to the multicultural nature of societies. As explained by Rojek and Urry [25], "migration has brought many 'exotic', 'foreign' cultures into the cities of Europe, the Americas and Australia."

Nonetheless, the phenomenon of domestic 'zoo syndrome' is not only the result of migratory flows into Western countries. Exoticization processes are also due to endogenous factors. This signifies that cultural change can be the result of internal causes [26]. An example of this is the case of the Norwegian fishermen interviewed by Puijk [27]. In several interviews conducted by Puijk [27], the fishermen relayed that

they felt “an exotic animal” when being photographed by tourists. In this example, it is demonstrated the existence of certain internal mechanisms that activate the desire for the search of the exotic (see Section 3.2).

Another example of exoticization processes corresponding to endogenous factors can be found in next-gen travelers. According to Ramgade and Kalgi [28], “when they travel to different places either in their country or out of their country they try to find their dreams, goals and passion while meeting new people, visiting new regions and experiencing new culture.” Nonetheless, in many occasions, the visit to exotic places is due to a previous search within social networks. Clearly, it should not be forgotten that next-gen travelers grew up under the context of digitalization through the adoption of new technologies [29].

3. Different approaches to exoticism in the social and human sciences

3.1 The anthropological approach

According to Augé [12], exoticism from the time of romanticism onward was conceived as the simultaneous evidence of a relative similarity and a radical difference. For instance, he considers that an exotic religion is a belief system that has certain traits in common so that a Judeo-Christian believer can recognize it. However, any Western believer would not consider it ‘a religion’, viewing in it a degeneration of the true religion [30]. Equally important was the role played by the audiovisual format in the consolidation of ethnographic fieldwork [31]. As revealed by Piault [32], there is a relationship between the emergence of ethnographic cinema and the consolidation of fieldwork-based anthropology. To him, there are a number of features that link the emergence of ethnographic cinema with the emergence of empirical fieldwork. These features are contradictory, as they concurrently represent a certain familiarity and a marked cultural difference.

Alternatively, the anthropologist Viveiros de Castro [33] developed an innovative approach to the exotic gaze of members of Western civilization toward other cultures. In an article not widely known in the anthropological literature, the Brazilian anthropologist explains an interesting perspective of analysis on the processes of exoticization among different cultures. Taking some elements from psychoanalytic theory and applying them to the field of culture, Viveiros de Castro [33] concludes that exoticism represents *a form of narcissism*. According to him, the illusion of exoticism consists in imagining that one can clearly define the boundaries of oneself and the Other. To show that, he describes the gaze that Amazonian Indians have on Western man, and the image that the latter *projects* on extraterrestrials. As a result, he points out that Indians see white men as very technologically advanced people, sophisticated, and capable of building complex artifacts.

Nevertheless, at the same time, Indians see us as fearful and incapable of controlling our emotions [9]. By contrast, the white-western man *projects* the image of extraterrestrials as technologically highly developed people, but esthetically ugly and asexual. Beyond the examples of the projections of the Amazonian Indian on the white man, and of the latter on the extraterrestrials, “exoticism says much more about the person making a judgment” [33]. As explained by the Brazilian anthropologist, the exoticism “is a form of egocentrism, of narcissism, in which the Other remains linked to the self” [33]. Despite the innovative nature of his approach, he did not consider a key aspect of this phenomenon: the immanent desire for the experience of the exotic.

Likewise, Clifford [34] explained the role played by exotic objects as well as other types of non-Western ornaments in the creation of anthropological research institutes. To him, “the creation of anthropological research institutions required a fashionable enthusiasm for things exotic” [34]. This was because until the middle of the twentieth century, “anthropological museums sent men traveling in one direction to obtain objects” [35]. In this way, the exotic objects that made up part of the collections in Western museums played a key role in the consolidation of the discipline. Moreover, even today, objects from other cultures continue to exert a certain fascination to both specialists in material culture and private collectors [36].

3.2 The Freudian perspective

Freud [37] in his book *Civilization and Its Discontents* introduces for the first time in his theory the concept of “narcissism of minor differences.” This term arises on the basis of observations made by Freud on the aggressive instinct of individuals in ethnic conflicts. According to him, the narcissism of minor differences was the main motive that triggered conflicts between different ethnic groups. Freud [37] concluded that it was the difference that provoked aggression. However, several decades later, some scholars revisited this thesis [38–40]. For instance, following the approach developed by Devereux [39], the narcissism of minor differences does not arise as a consequence of difference, but in the *creation* of difference.

On a conscious level, we exclude ‘Others’ who are different, but unconsciously, we hate the sameness [38]. Therefore, the projection of hatred says much more about oneself than about the Other. According to Devereux [39], the narcissism of minor differences “induces one to construe unfamiliar beliefs and practices as criticisms of one’s own, and makes one react to them negatively.” Evidently, this notion is linked to another concept proposed by Freud [41]: the ‘uncanny’ (*das unheimliche*). Following Derrida’s [42] approach, the ‘uncanny’ is “a stranger who is already found within.” The feeling of a strangeness of the ordinary haunts individuals at certain moments in their lives.

Originally published in 1919 under the title ‘The Uncanny’ (*Das Unheimliche* in German), Freud [41] developed the thesis of the existence of a strangeness of the ordinary by which the known becomes strange or the strange becomes known. Thus, in his etymological analysis of the term ‘uncanny’, Freud [41] revealed that “the German word *unheimlich* is obviously, the opposite of *heimlich* [‘homely’], *heimisch* [‘native’]-the opposite of what is familiar.” Of course, “we are tempted to conclude that what is ‘uncanny’ is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar” [41]. An event which is encountered is an unsettling, eerie context. For this reason, the ‘uncanny’ represents one of the first critiques to Western rationality [43]. By proposing the existence of an unfamiliar realm in human beings, the exotic questions the idea of an individual fully conscious of its acts. As James Clifford [34] concluded, “the exotic was a prime court of appeal against the rational, the beautiful, the normal of the West.”

3.3 Esthetic analysis

The first research to develop an esthetic analysis of ‘exoticism’ was conducted by the French writer and archeologist Victor Segalen. Written between 1904 and 1918, the *Essay on Exoticism: An Esthetics of Diversity* attempts to thwart the different conceptions of exoticism that prevailed at the time. According to Segalen [44], the exotic implied a starting point for the discussions of alterity, diversity, and ethnicity.

For this reason, Segalen designs a new conception of the 'exotic'. The new concept deconstructs the nineteenth-century notions of exoticism (considered weird and enigmatic), and the predisposition to reduce the exotic to the colonial [45]. Taking into account that theories of alterity and cultural diversity abound in the current academic field, one of Segalen's main contributions consisted in giving an esthetic and ontological *status* to the phenomenon of exoticism.

Therefore, exoticism was conceived as an *operative function* and not as a concept linked to a particular time and space. In the same way, the philosopher Deleuze [46] considered the Baroque as "an operative function" or "a trait," and not as a particular historical period. Therefore, this new esthetic perspective of exoticism was summed up by Segalen [44] in the following sentence, "exoticism's power is nothing other than the ability to conceive otherwise." Prior to Segalen's theoretical contribution, the French adjective 'exotique' was used to refer to the objects of another country, but the notion rapidly became a synonym of colonialism by the nineteenth century [34]. Clearly, Segalen's perception of the exotic was radically different from that of his colonial contemporaries.

Traditionally in Western culture, the Other has been a source of fear and fascination. This conception has been marked by its current Eurocentrism. Nonetheless, at present, exoticism is a concept of critical currency, specially within the field of post-colonialism studies and literary criticism. Thus, Segalen's approach of 'Otherness' anticipates much of the current postcolonial critique of colonial discourse. One of his major contributions consisted in removing the 'pejorative sense' that the term exoticism had in that moment [45]. His *esthetics of diversity* implied a new representation of the Other. Several decades later, Clifford [34] will use "the term surrealism in an obviously expanded sense," with the aim to "provoke the manifestation of extraordinary realities drawn from the domains of the erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious."

4. Next-gen travelers and the geography of exoticism

According to many researchers [28, 29, 47], there are a number of traits that characterize the tourism preferences of Generation Z, Millennials, or Next-Gen Travelers. These range from the type of housing to the search for certain experiences. Unlike past generations, they consider travel to be a vital part of their lives. They are almost always adventurous. They are characterized by a sense of adventure and desire for authenticity and in other words, new and meaningful experiences. Certainly, 43% of next-gen travelers seek out experiences that are 'new' [48]. Within this search, there is a desire to know and experience the exotic. For next-gen travelers, every trip (business, leisure, and tourism) is a chance to experience something unique.

Therefore, these new generation travelers like to experience activities different from those preferred by the older generation. Moreover, Generation Z's desire to know the exotic is not only limited to *gaze* (in John Urry's perspective) but also to *capture* the event. This capturing is mainly done through photos and reels. These are then uploaded to various social networks and applications. According to Pricope Vancia et al. [49], "specific to Generation Z in terms of tourist behavior is that they post photos and videos of their vacations on social media platforms." The selection of these photos and reels is not innocent. The aim of the posting is to generate an "affection-image" or an impact on the people who are around them [50].

For this reason, "people's expectations, requirements, or preferences regarding the purpose, place, and time of their holiday vary depending on their age" [49].

Regarding this topic, the context of digitalization and the adoption of new technologies plays a fundamental role. The search on different blogs or digital platforms allows the next-gen travelers to choose for an authentic and experiential travel experience. Evidently, curiosity for the exotic is, in general, one of the most sought-after preferences. By considering exoticism as an *operative function* and disconnecting it from a specific historical period, the desire for the fascination of the exotic has crossed the different generations of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

Nevertheless, Baby Boomers (born between 1940 and 1959), Generation X (born between 1960 and 1979), Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1994), and Generation Z (born after 1995), have specific cultural patterns [47]. Undoubtedly, “members of those generations exhibit specific behaviors and consumption patterns due to the context in which they were born and lived most of their lives” [49]. This directly impacts the travel behaviors. For example, during the post-World War II era, Baby Boomers emerged as a generation deeply influenced by the ideology of consumption. Beyond the cultural differences between generations, the desire to experience the exotic is a common trait. In the case of the Baby Boomers, the push factors (reasons why someone goes to the destination) were driven by photos and advertisements in the traditional media: magazines, radio, and TV.

As for the type of accommodation, the Generation Z or Next-Gen Travelers prefer hostels and Airbnbs rather than hotels. Based on the research carried out by ***Setiawan et al., Pricope Vancia et al. [49] explained that “Generation Z members use online media rather than conventional travel agencies to search for information and make reservations.” In general, they book hostels with certain features, for example, hostels with living rooms, game tables, a library with a USB facility, gymnasium, and disco dance floor, among others amenities. Regarding food, they prefer exotic meals and beverages as compared to conventional and formal meals [29].

4.1 The exotic function in next-gen travelers: beyond push and pull factors

In tourism studies, the classical motivation theory of tourism could be explained by the notions of *push-factor* and *pull-factor*. According to Dann’s [51] model, push-factors are the internal needs and desires of tourists (which generates the demand of travel), while pull-factors are something that destinations have to attract tourists to come. In other words, push-factors could be defined as reasons why you should go to the destination, whereas pull-factors are the forces and hopes that tourists hold about a destination. Nonetheless, in the case of next-gen travelers or millennials, the exotic function transcends the division between the two categories. This makes it impossible to clearly define which aspects fall into each category.

Considering that Generation Z was born and grew up in a context of digitalization and new technologies, the sense of adventure and desire for the exotic come from the social media and video platforms. Additionally, they prefer authentic and experiential travels. In fact, almost 80% plan their trips online [48]. As digital natives, they rely on blogs, social media, and video platforms to plan their trips. A few decades ago, it was difficult to distinguish between push-factors and pull-factors, and with the new information technologies within homes, it is impossible to make this division. Consequently, the categories of push-factors and pull-factors currently have no empirical value for understanding the tourism mobility of next-gen travelers.

For this reason, it is essential to design a new tourism profile of the next-gen travelers. This aims not only to achieve an understanding of the traveler *ethos* but also to provide tools for better applicability in the tourism industry. While some tourism

profiles of next-gen travelers exist, they have not considered the relevance of the exotic function. In other words, they have not considered the “exotic realm” as a unit of analysis. This encompasses everything from the pre-trip planning decision to dissemination of travel experiences across social media. However, the *exotic function* transcends the push and pull factors, as it becomes the primary motivation to travel. For this reason, we present below a new tourism profile of the next-gen travelers. **Table 1** is made up of six research variables.

4.2 Methodology and techniques

First of all, to obtain primary data from some members of next-gen travelers, we considered the most appropriate qualitative research techniques to achieve the goal [52]. As a result, for the design of **Table 1**, three types of data were collected: (1) focus group discussion, (2) in-depth interviewing, and (3) secondary data. Accordingly, to determine the “exotic realm” as a unit of analysis, six research variables were established: push factors and pull factors (pre-trip planning decision), booking, type of accommodation, type of vacation, type of transport, and dissemination of travel experiences across social media.

Regarding the dynamics of focus groups, certain criteria were stated to select the participants. Hence, to collect the different opinions on the study subject, four criteria were established: (1) being between 18 and 25 years old, (2) being born in Uruguayan soil, (3) having taken at least one exotic/adventurous trip in the last 2 years, and (4) be an undergraduate student in a degree program offered by the Universidad de la República or the Universidad Católica del Uruguay. Likewise, from the research conducted by Vancia et al. [49], “the recruitment of participants was carried out in a location with a potentially high concentration of Generation Z members, such as a university environment.”

Apart from that, 32 in-depth interviews were conducted, applying the methodological criterion of non-representative random samples [53]. This was due to random sampling from strata within Generation Z members excludes some unrepresentative combinations. Indeed, the main objective of the in-depth interviews was to know about the exotic function in relation to pre-trip planning decision, booking, type of accommodation, type of vacation, type of transport, and the dissemination of travel experiences across social media. Finally, secondary data were collected through books, journals, and millennials blogs.

4.3 Slum tourism: the zoologization of ‘favela’ dwellers in Brazil

Slum tourism in Brazil is one of the most well-known tourist attractions in the world. Alongside India, South Africa, and other countries, a large number of tourists visit the country every year with the purpose of getting to know one of the poorest places in the world. Since the year 1990, going to ‘favelas’ (shanty houses) has become one of the most popular attractions in Rio de Janeiro’s city. Especially for next-gen travelers [54]. One of the main attraction factors of the ‘favelas’ is the view of the city. For instance, in the case of the Rocinha and Vidigal favelas in Rio de Janeiro, the panoramic view is one of the most demanded tourist attractions by Generation Z tourists [55].

Although the phenomenon of ‘favela tourism’ exists in some Brazilian cities, it is in Rio de Janeiro where it has its origin and greatest tourist development. Nonetheless, this type of tourism has been the target of much criticism from the academic world.

Research variables	Indicator	Exotic realm
Push factors and pull factors (pre-trip planning decision)	Exploring cities	X
	Know local communities	
	Discovering new (exotic) cultures	X
	Relaxing	
Booking	Brand websites	
	Online travel agencies	
	Blogs	X
	Video platforms	
Type of accommodation	Hostel	
	Airbnb	
	Glamping	X
	Camping	
	Motorhome	
	Camper	
Type of vacation	Seaside vacations	
	Exotic trips	X
	City Breaks	
Type of transport	Plane	
	Car	
	Motorhome	
	Bicycle	
	Cycle rickshaw	X
	Auto rickshaw	X
	Ferry	X
	Coracle	X
Dissemination of travel experiences across social media	Instagram	X
	TikTok	
	Reels	X
	YouTube	

Source: Author research.

Table 1.
Tourism profile of next-gen travelers (unit of analysis: exotic realm).

One of the criticisms that this form of tourism has received points out that “slum tourism treats poverty as an immoral entertainment that insults the dignity of the disadvantaged” [56]. Evidently, ‘favela tourism’ exists because of the desire of tourists to know how the poor live. Of course, curiosity about this world of deprivation and precarious conditions is driven by a certain search for the exotic. Such is the curiosity aroused by these illegal settlements on some of Rio’s “morros” (rock formations) that in 1996, the pop singer Michael Jackson recorded the video clip “They Don’t Really Care About Us” [54].

According to Freire-Medeiros [54], the main reason for the visit of the pop artist and director Spike Lee was “to expose the indifference of public power and elites toward poverty.” In relation to the link between the domestic ‘zoo syndrome’ and the ‘favela tourism’, this can be seen in the interpersonal relationship generated between next-gen travelers and the local population. In general, the firsts “treats dwellers as zoological specimens” [56]. The zoologization of favela dwellers by tourists produces “a sign associated with ambivalent signifiers which place it as the extreme Other” [54]. That is, a feeling of a strangeness of the ordinary (uncanny), whose combination is “capable of both seduction (for its authenticity and solidarity) and threat (for its violence and non-rationality)” [54].

4.4 Slum tourism as a type of urban tourism

Given the transcultural character of this phenomenon, exoticism has been conceived throughout this chapter as a function, and not as a term linked to a particular time and space. This leads us to rethink the notion of exoticism in contemporary Western societies. For this reason, both the traditional ‘zoo syndrome’ and the domestic ‘zoo syndrome’ share the same symbolic matrix. Considering that “much tourism happens within domestic (national) environments” [18], there is a direct connection between exoticism, urban tourism, and next-gen travelers. This link is due to the fact that “the polycentric, multifunctional, and culturally diversified nature of urban areas...attracts significant numbers of tourists for varied purposes other than vacationing” [14].

From ‘ruin tourism’ [23], passing through ‘hip-hop tourism’ [4], continuing with the different forms of ‘slum tourism’ [57], until reaching the sinister sites of ‘dark tourism’ [58], all these types of tourism have a common trait: urban character. Additionally, within urban tourism, we also find cases linked to the immaterial. This can be seen in ‘ghost tourism’. An example of this is the research carried out by David Inglis and Mary Holmes [59], on the emergence of ‘haunted hotels’ in some Scottish cities. This type of tourism (linked to the *non-human*) has urban centers as its main area of development. As explained by Inglis and Holmes [59], ‘Ghost walks’ have sprung up in many Scottish urban centers in recent years.

5. Conclusion

Throughout the article, it was demonstrated that the so-called ‘zoo syndrome’ is not a phenomenon that manifests itself only in relation to non-Western cultures and developing countries. This means that, in large cities as well as in more remote cultures, exoticism constitutes *at the same time* a push-factor and a pull-factor for next-gen travelers and millennials. As Augé [12] concluded, “exoticism is not, in fact, linked to geographical distance, nor even to belonging to a given ethnic group.” Due to the transcultural nature of the phenomenon, exoticism has been conceived throughout the chapter as an *operative function*, and not as a concept linked to a particular time and space. Nonetheless, the domestic ‘zoo syndrome’ has some different traits designed by Krippendorf [3].

First of all, it is an *internal* and not an external exoticism. Secondly, it is characterized by being transversal and multicultural, crossing the different social classes and ethnic groups. Thirdly, it transcends the tourist activity *per se*, developing also in everyday life. Despite the differences with the original term, the domestic ‘zoo

syndrome' retains some common traits. One of these traits consists of the desire for the experimentation of the exotic. Another characteristic is the asymmetry of power that always results between the exoticizer and the exoticized. Therefore, it is important to rethink this notion not only in the field of tourism anthropology but also in the field of tourism studies in general.

In summary, from our point of view, the concept continues to have theoretical and epistemological relevance for the understanding of certain phenomena. Furthermore, it is fundamental to deepen this notion in the field of tourism studies in order to avoid falling into some forms of racism and discrimination. For example, giving voice to 'others' or 'subalterns' does not mean establishing a symmetrical relationship with the Other. As stated by Hall [6], "the process of giving voice to others is never neutral and works itself through power structures." Consequently, rethinking notions like those help us to promote a more inclusive tourism, free of prejudice and discrimination. In fact, "tourism is only possible where there is a welcome at the level of human interaction" [18].

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