

CONSUMPTION OF EXPERIENCE AND CONTEMPORARY TOURISM: THE CAMPAIGN *CAN'T SKIP PORTUGAL*

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ABSTRACT

In order to understand the transformations in contemporary tourist consumption practices and discourses, we have tried to discuss in this article how the publicity carried out by Turismo de Portugal represents the country as a tourist destination in an online campaign, launched in 2017, aimed at the international public, entitled *Can't Skip Portugal*. We seek to understand the built strategies and the allusion made to emotions and experience as objects to be consumed by visitors, articulating theoretical considerations from the Sociology of Tourism and of Culture regarding tourism activity and “consumption of experience” with the perspective of Cultural Studies.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Studies; consumption of experience; Portugal; publicity; tourism

CONSUMO DA EXPERIÊNCIA E TURISMO CONTEMPORÂNEO: A CAMPANHA *CAN'T SKIP PORTUGAL*

RESUMO

Com o objetivo de perceber as transformações nas práticas e discursos de consumo turístico contemporâneos, buscamos discutir neste artigo de que modo a publicidade realizada pelo Turismo de Portugal representa o país enquanto destino turístico em um filme publicitário da campanha online, lançada em 2017, voltada para os públicos internacionais, intitulada *Can't Skip Portugal*. Buscamos perceber as estratégias contruídas e a alusão feita às emoções e à experiência enquanto objetos a serem consumidos pelos visitantes, a partir da articulação com considerações teóricas oriundas da Sociologia do Turismo e da Cultura a respeito da atividade turística e do “consumo da experiência” e da perspectiva dos Estudos Culturais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Consumo da experiência; Estudos Culturais; Portugal; publicidade; turismo

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand how tourism and the consumption of experience are increasingly related in contemporary times, we seek to discuss in this article how the advertising made by Turismo de Portugal builds its enunciative promises in the recent campaign directed at international audiences entitled *Can't Skip Portugal*. We wanted to understand the built strategies and the allusion made to the emotions of each of the possible visitors to be experienced in a single destination: Portugal.

Different from a common experience of consumption, in the consumption of experience, experience is the very object, material or immaterial to be consumed (Pereira, Siciliano & Rocha, 2015) mobilizing a true “experience economy” that includes leisure activities, games, tourism and distraction aimed at generating emotion, ties, affections and sensations (Lipovetsky, 2006, p. 54).

In this approach, initially, consumption and tourism will be contextualized as phenomena of contemporary mass culture marked by globalization and mobility, in the light of the approaches of some of the theorists of the Sociology of Culture and Tourism (Bauman, 1998, 2007; Krippendorf, 2009; Lipovetsky, 2007, 2008; Martins, 2017; Urry, 2001). Then, a brief interpretative reading of an advertising film of the above-mentioned campaign will be made, in the light of Cultural Studies, relating it to the theoretical framework presented here.

TOURISM AND THE CONSUMPTION OF EXPERIENCE

Tourists (...) leave because they find the home dull or not attractive enough, too familiar and too few surprises, or because they expect to find elsewhere a more exciting adventure and sensations more intense than the domestic routine is never able to transmit. (Bauman, 1998, p. 116)

According to data from the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 2017, there was a 7% increase in the number of international trips compared to the previous year, accounting for 1.3 billion international trips, which generated \$ 1.237 billion in revenues, representing 10% of the world's Gross Domestic Product. Figures show that tourism is gaining increasing importance among consumers around the world.

The touristic activity generates different desires, roles and social dynamics in between the inbound and outbound communities. It promotes economical and symbolical exchange and it is based on the collective imaginaries of places, at the same time which fills, or tries to fill, lacks that appear in less attractive routines, especially in the frenetic rhythms of big urban centres.

Krippendorf (2009) points out that individuals take all opportunities to travel and get away from daily routine with higher frequency as possible as they no longer feel comfortable where they are, work or live. They travel to undo, even if temporarily, their boring routine. Through the symbolic consumption of landscapes, culture and different experiences, the individual become able to “bare” the daily routine for some time. In a

similar way, Bauman (1998) states that tourists choose (or think they're choosing) to travel because they think their homes are boring, not attractive enough, too familiar and holding to few surprises.

Therefore, the touristic experience massification is a reflex from contemporary massification of life, once tourism tends to be as fluid and ephemeral as consumption relationships in the contemporaneity.

Characterized as “supreme masters of the art of melting the solids and liquids”, Bauman (1998, p. 114), states that tourists hold the achievement of not belonging to the visited place. Traveling without the need of becoming part of the culture, they may leave to their next destination the minute the experience gets out of control or when other more interesting adventures present itself on the path: “mobility is the name of the game: one must be able to move when the needs push or the dreams call (...) The point of tourist life is to be on the move, not to arrive” (Bauman, 1998, p. 114).

The contemporary experience crisis is considered by Martins (2017, p. 19) as one of “decentred daily routine, without ground, which lives from emotions, and not from ideas, in an accelerated time speed of total or infinite mobilization”. According to the author, the technologies synthetized on the computer screen enable a permanent mobilization. We add that, seduced by digital images, individuals travel, in fact, in search of new emotions and experiences, thus increasing tourism all over the world.

A destination choice is motivated by multiple factors. The world touristic destination market booster the growth of marketing campaigns oriented for different public and markets. Accompanying the needs and wills from contemporary men and women eager for new experiences, touristic planning bodies, after detailed analyses of all possible touristic niches and segments, choose the more competitive market position. They search, simultaneously, to diversify and individualize the experiences, in other words, to offer a greater range of products that meet personalized demands and needs.

However, the touristic entity of an object, whether it is a natural or cultural patrimony, as stated by Santos (2008), is made by a group of conventions which regulates the aesthetic communicative action. Placing tourism among consumer practices of late modernity which express a “sign of excess”, an “urgency culture”, a “hyper functionality” and the movement and decline of traditional forms of meaning, Santos (2008, p. 112) defends that the touristic activity reflects the “big systems of world representation (which) are taken as ephemeral consumption objects and under permanent recycling”.

The touristic practices are placed, therefore, in the contemporary ways of living and of consuming and, as such, incorporate and reify aspects of the social, economic and symbolic dynamics which integrate the consumption logics and consumerism of nowadays, namely liquidity, ephemerality, individualization and disposability. Bauman (2007) considers the consumption as the “main driving force and functional of society”, affecting, among other dimensions, individual and collective identification processes. For the academic, in a liquid-modern environment, the sense of time is renegotiated, set by discontinuity, inconsistencies and lack of cohesion and by a “multiplicity of eternal moments – events, incidents, adventures, episodes” (Bauman, 2008, p. 46). Therefore,

we consider that the way of consumption and its own relation with time which marks the consumption of activities related with leisure and tourism also contribute for the inter-relationships and self-identification processes of individuals and of their groups.

Although Urry reinforces the gaze nature as something fundamental to the tourism, (2001, p. 29), he also refers the importance of tourism as a consumption activity, since “the daydream and the expectancy, both disguised, are fundamental processes for the modern consumption”. The author reflects upon individuals who do not search satisfaction from acquisition and use of products, but from the expectancy, from the search of pleasure, which lie in the imagination. This way, people’s basic motivation, related with consumption, is not, therefore, purely materialistic:

rather, people seek to experience in reality the pleasurable dramas they have already experienced in their imagination. However, because “reality” can never bring about the perfected pleasures that the individual encounters in daydreams, every purchase leads to disappointment and yearning for ever newer products. There is a dialectic of novelty and insatiability at the heart of contemporary consumerism. (Urry, 2001, p. 30)

However, the author arguments that this daydream and the expectancy of new and different experiences that are a part of tourism are not autonomous, since “they involve working over advertising and other media-generated sets of signs, many of which relating to complex processes of social emulation” (Urry, 2001, p. 30).

The commercialization of the experiences involves the resizing of numerous products and services, in addition to the tourist activity, in order to offer a diversity of experiences and experiences to the new consumer. Thus, media discourse, including advertising, feeds on, and at the same time reinforces, these and other transformations in contemporary consumer practices.

Lipovetsky (2007, p.54) refers the “economy of experience” to refer to leisure, games, tourism and distraction activities that offer a set of “experiences, unexpected and extraordinary events capable of generating emotions, bonds, affections, sensations “to what he calls hyperconsumers”. In this way, tourism organizes the scenarios in order to offer, in the form of increasingly customized tourist packages, the consumption of experience, whether in historic centers or well-preserved villages or amusement parks.

In this way, building a range of sensations and experiences,

historic cities become thematic cities designed to respond to the search for “authenticity”, which leads tourists eager to escape the routine, eager for folkloric environments and exotics. In some thematic parks are reconstructed virtual or immaterially old cities, reserves of Indians, animals in danger of extinction, moments of our history. Others recreate specific indoors climates, rainforests, snowstorms, seascapes; others still simulate volcanic eruptions or earthquakes. (Lipovetsky, 2007, p. 54)

With the aim to define operationally the concept, Pereira, Siciliano and Rocha (2015, p. 9) consider the “consumption of experience” as “the social use, reinforced by the

societal classification and meanings system, of consumption goods that are, on themselves, the practices and social interactions involved on the experience". For that matter, the experience is in itself the object to be consumed. Unlike an everyday consumption experience, for these authors, the consumption of experience "demands a total immersion of the individual into an environment allusive to a previous memory and to the displacement of identity, objects, environments' meanings, among other constituent elements of real world" (Pereira, Siciliano & Rocha, 2015, p. 6).

In view of the above, the authors suggest a set of assumptions that must occur simultaneously so that a consumption practice may be considered an "experience consumption":

(1) a physical or virtual space, whose access necessarily presupposes some kind of "price", and which is intentionally prepared to experience sensations, emotions and impressions within a limited and punctual time; (2) an earlier ritualized preparation; (3) a narrative, fragments of it or some previously known reference; (4) a consensual participation of the individual or the group, a kind of tacit agreement among the participants regarding the suspension of disbelief and the playful, magical or imagined aspects that will be presented in that space as a "simulacrum"; (5) the displacement of meanings subjectively experienced; and, finally, (6) that such repertoire endowed with meaning has total correspondence with the original narrative. (Pereira, Siciliano & Rocha, 2014, p. 6)

In this way, we understand that touristic discourses and practices aiming to offer the consumer-tourist what he wishes to find on touristic destinations, be it unforgettable experiences or unique and/or exotics cultures, shape and simplify the complexity of the places in consumption objects. About this issue, Santos (2008, p. 116) considers that the culture situationally built for the visits, transfigured "by the nature of tourism", shows its value by the show, by the emotions which generates, by the evocations which carries and not for a meaning which may be holding.

Its own relation with art is also reset due to the logic of "turistification" of culture equipment, especially in destinations which receive a great number of tourists¹. Regarding this, Lipovestky and Serroy (2008, p. 131) observe that we live in a "time of generalised patrimonialization and museum inflation: the important places in history are visited by millions of visitants and painting prestigious exhibitions attract hundreds of thousands tourists"; thus, according to the authors, people spend hours in queues to enter museums, but do not read the poets, the classics: "one does not see Homero nor Petrarca, visiting instead the Acropolis and Florence palaces. The readers of The New Heloise are rare, but the opera house is sold out" (Lipovestky & Serroy, 2008. p. 131).

The authors consider that artistic culture never had such a massive audience as now. However, these tourist audiences are marked by the consumerist logic, in which,

¹ The Louvre museum, in Paris, received, only on the year of 2016, 7.4 million visitors. Information available at <https://www.louvre.fr/en>

through a hurried zapping, the works of art are consumed as fast food, without any veneration, recollection or silence, but with the relaxation characteristic of those who are on vacation.

Thus, for Lipovestky and Serroy (2008), the aura of the work of art is substituted by another kind of experience: the touristic experience. Here, the art pieces begin to function as objects for crowd entertainment and not as aesthetic contemplation and spiritual elevation, as an amusement, secondary emotions and free time occupation. The recognition of the great masterpieces hasn't been lost, but the appreciation becomes immediate, made without training or intellectual work.

At the same time, the massive process of "touristification" of the places has affected the daily life of the people who live in the places that receive large tourist flows in their most diverse dimensions, ranging from the difficulty of circulation and comfortable use of the means of transportation available, through the inflating of consumer products, noise pollution, visual or excessive production of waste, or even intercultural encounters that are sometimes unfriendly, among many others.

Another trait that marks the role of mobility and consumption of contemporary experiences is its influence on (re) identity configurations. Consumption and leisure are considered as identity investments. Although Ribeiro (2010, p. 193) considers that "travel, transition, strangeness, intermittent" are rarely associated with the concept of identity in intense theoretical debates, travel, according to this author, is perhaps the most striking feature of modernity, since it is "change, openness, risk, irradiation, fusion".

Whether as a mechanism of escape from dull routines, whether to live new emotions and experiences, in a logic of mobility and ephemerality, or to serve as a mechanism of differentiation and identification of individuals, or all of this at the same time, tourism is an undeniable trait of contemporary societies.

In view of this context, it will be presented, in the next section, how Tourism of Portugal, the body responsible for planning, managing and promoting tourism in Portugal, has developed its recent online campaign to promote international tourism: *Can't Skip Portugal*. The objective is to observe, through an interpretative reading of the speeches and images present in an advertising film of this campaign, how the representations and the discursive promises are directed to the transformations in contemporary consumption, especially what we call here "consumption of experience".

EMPIRICAL ANALYSES: CAN'T SKIP PORTUGAL

REPRESENTATION SYSTEMS AND THE CULTURAL STUDIES PERSPECTIVES

From the understanding that culture is present in all social practices (Hall, 2003), including contemporary lifestyles and consumption, our interest in analysis is to perceive modes of representation through advertising discourse, circumscribed to the dynamics of activity tourism, and how it reiterates and reinforces certain imagery and consumption practices about tourist destinations, especially what is called here as "consumption of experience".

Lisboa, Filho and Moraes (2014) defend the legitimacy of Cultural Studies as a theoretical-methodological contribution capable of guiding research in communication, including audiovisual media, considering the cultural nature of audiovisual productions and their production, circulation and consumption processes. Similarly, Escosteguy (2007, p. 4) also claims that, even if an integrated approach to production and consumption may not be unique to Cultural Studies, this tradition has generated debates and efforts in this direction after the “development of a more contextualist approach to Reception Studies, which diminished interest in the content of the media texts themselves, concentrating their attention more on the daily life of a group in which, among so many other activities, the use of the media is observed”.

Considering that culture is related with “shared meanings”, Hall (2003) defends that language is a privileged way through which we give meaning to things and produced and exchanged meanings, since these can only be shared through our common access to language. Therefore, language is central for meaning and culture is a repository-key of cultural values and meanings, once it works as a representation system.

For Hall (2003), especially on Cultural Studies and Sociology of Culture, there is a tendency to emphasize the importance of meaning in a definition of culture. Culture not only as a set of things – novels and pictures or comedy and TV shows – but as a process, a group of practices. Culture, under this perspective, organizes and regulates social practices, influences our conduct and consequently has practical and real effects.

Thus, the “circuit of culture” proposed by Gay, Hall et. al (quoted in Hall, 2003, p. 1) suggests that meanings are produced in many different places and circulate through a variety of processes and practices, including identity construction and difference boundary, in the production and consumption, as well as on regulating social conduct.

Regarding representation, Hall (2003) sustains that sounds, words, musical notes, gestures, expressions, clothes, among other forms of representation are carriers or means which bring meaning because they operate as symbols which represent meanings that we wish to communicate, in other words, they work as signs.

In this way, we will make an interpretive reading, from a careful description, in order to perceive how the publicity film published by Turismo de Portugal represents the country as a tourist destination, looking for the meanings that underlie it and their articulation with consumption tourist attraction. In this work, therefore, we will not cover the culture circuit proposed by the author. The instances of production and modes of reception of this and other advertising pieces of Turismo de Portugal are being studied in other works².

ADVERTISING MOVIE: *CAN'T SKIP FREEDOM*

Considered as a strategic priority by Portuguese government³, nowadays, tourism is Portugal's biggest exporting activity, according to the document *Tourism Strategy*

² As part of our research project in the Doctoral Program in Cultural Studies, at the University of Minho

³ Available at <http://estrategia.turismodeportugal.pt/o-que-e>

2027- ET27. This document summarizes the strategies for tourism in the country from 2017 to 2027, combining a long-term vision with actions in the short and medium term and defines, among other goals, to increase the number of overnight stays, in the order of 80 million a year, and grow to 26 billion euros in revenue generated.

Integrated with the Ministry of Economy and Innovation, Turismo de Portugal is the National Tourism Authority, responsible for the promotion, valuation and sustainability of tourism activity in Portugal and brings together all the institutional competences related to the dynamism of tourism in Portugal, including the supply and tourist demand⁴. Among its functions is the promotion of the destination Portugal nationally and internationally, including communication actions and relationship with the markets, among which the management of the website www.visitportugal.com and other social media (YouTube channel, Facebook pages, Instagram, Twitter, Google+, among others). In 2017, Portugal received the World Travel Awards “Best Destination of the World” award, which confirms the country’s aggressive marketing strategy in international markets.

With the slogan *Can't skip Portugal*, the campaign of international promotion of tourism of Portugal for 2017 and 2018 was launched by Turismo de Portugal (TP), exclusively in a digital medium to spread the country in 20 countries, defined as target markets. According to information available on the website of the TP, the campaign “bets on the message that there is no way to pass alongside a destination like this: authentic and unique, with so much to see, taste, feel and experience”. The intention of the campaign, therefore, is to refer to the senses and the experiences and to promise the consumer the realization of an “authentic” experience.

In the launching of the campaign in March 2017, four publicity films were produced by Partners, in which three foreign characters (one English, one French and one German) narrated reflections about their inspirations and longings while living different experiences in beautiful places, of several regions of Portugal. The films are available in English on YouTube’s Visit Portugal channel, with subtitles in other languages (French, Spanish, German, Italian, Russian and Portuguese) available. The following description is made in this section of channel videos: “Life passes us by, time slips through our fingers. Decide your next stop, pick your next destination. Can’t skip life. Can’t skip us. Can’t skip Portugal”.

At the beginning of the three videos is displayed a quick text, with white letters on a black background, in which it is informed that the film was recorded entirely in the month of December, during the winter. Then there are images of each of the characters and the audio of their reflections.

In the film *Can't skip Inspirations*, a young woman, with a French accent, goes down to several places, concentrated on urban landscapes, with well-preserved historical buildings and, at the same time, modern constructions with bold architecture, while thinks how this inspires her. At the video description, we are informed that “Chloe is a young lady who’s tired of feeling uninspired with life. She wants joy, she wants enthusiasm, she wants beauty. She leaves for a place where she finds herself seduced by history, by old

⁴ Information available at Tourism of Portugal’s website page: www.turismodeportugal.pt.

traditions dressed as new, by a new life”⁵. Although walks by urban centres, the cities and places where the young woman goes seems to be empty, so that she may search beauty and inspiration through peaceful and organized environments.

At the entitled film *Can't Skip New Beginnings*, a man, looking to have more than 60 years, with a German accent, speaks about new beginnings provided by life while lives what it seems to be, for him, new experiences: observes and feels the wind on his face in between beautiful mountain valleys, does fishing and eats joyfully among friends on a boat, walks thru historical villages, is recognized by people who waves for him while he drinks wine in local restaurant and even surfs (or intend to surf, we do not know effectively if he did) small or big waves. At the same time that he tries these new experiences, the character narrates a speech which reflects and exalts that getting old not as an end (“it is not a matter of happy endings, but new beginnings. Is not the time to take your bow”), but just as a life stage and not a moment to stop, but to restart, in a new place “of affection, where the food always brings a recollection of happy days, where human and the summer warmth harmonize, and where the sea always awaits your appreciative gaze”. The message of this film seems to aim to attract not only tourists, but also people to live in a permanent way in Portugal.

In the next film, with duration of 3’04”, entitled of *Can't skip Freedom* – on which we will focus our observation, the character, young, with English accent, comes initially walking by a scenario apparently deserted, among green mountains, making reflections about his existence. The choice for a more detailed and careful description of this video has taken place because the discursive promises of “consumption of experience” seem to be more evident in this narrative.

Initially, the character reveals a feeling of “detachment” with the context where he lives (“how many times have you left early, cancelled a meeting or otherwise change your plan? how many times have you said you were going but stayed right where you were thinking in the sack? how many times did you look at yourself from another perspective and grass when all said and done you’re simply in the wrong place?”) – at this moment the scenario changes for images of the same character, with suit and tie, walking fast in a big urban centre, in between “skyscrapers”, in a grey environment, when he stops and signs with a fatigue expression. After, the same character dives, into a blue ocean (not just representing the sea, but in a reference to big opportunities and experiences) and, turning back to ones on the other side of computer screen, says:

listen, we are the size of what we see and not the size of the things we have.
A man needs to see things with his own eyes, walk the world with his own feet, have his back burned by the Sun in his feet blistered by the street.
Which is harsher: the ice wind atop a mountain or a banking heat along the plain? It's only one way to know: seeing this with our very own eyes and not on our smartphones flashing up images of landscapes already shared a million times.

⁵ Dialogues available at Visit Portugal, Youtube.

As he follows making his reflections, the character circulates through beautiful natural landscapes, such as fields, beaches, top of the mountains, forests, streams, all, till then, with no human presence but his own. Then, it briefly shows an image of a beautiful woman, young, with a blue bikini, who stays in silence, while walking on an empty beach.

After, the character goes on: “that is why walks, come on walk, come and see... But look with the eyes of one who sees, wants to see, save it right here [while points to the head] and here [pointing to the heart]. Put your mobile away and go!”. Then the character continuous to walk, as who is discovering new and unexpected landscapes, while thinks:

to travel makes us bloom and wake up (...) In 20, 30, or 40 years we will regret of those things we did not do. For this reason, navigate away from harbour, let the wind blow on your sail and explore, dream and discover. Believe that the sky will look much bluer.

At this point, the blue bikini woman reappears, diving and arising in between blue waters as well.

His reflections continue: “you must have read: When something good happens, travel to celebrate. When something bad happens, travel to forget it. When nothing happens, travel to make something happen”. The woman then returns, but now alongside the main character, just at the moment when he says that we must travel for something to happen. At the end, he finishes saying: “Keep this in your head... It’s the truth and this is the proof, and it’s with our each and every day, we just have to read the signs. Because after all... You Can’t skip life”. Then the messages appear, as it follows: “Can’t skip love. Can’t skip joy. Can’t skip freedom. Can’t skip us. Can’t skip Portugal”. And finally, the trademark Visit Portugal. Only then it was identified the place where all the different exhibited landscapes through the film. The spectator, in fact, only knows the subject of the promotional video when it’s finished.

The speech is a port-modern *carpe diem*: seize the day, leave from in front the computer screen, live, discover and feel with your own eyes the incredible experiences a travel can bring. To disconnect from a tedious life or that traps you and go discover and dream of different places. As Bauman (2008) states, people travel to escape from routines very little attractive, and the main character of this video makes the invitation so that the spectator travels “so that something may happens”. The place could be anywhere in the world. There is not a single touristic icon for easy identification of the country – not a culture symbol, internationally recognised patrimony, food, drink, cloths – no objects which represents symbolically or make direct reference to Portugal. The strategy that seemed to be adopted was to seduce by means of beautiful pictures and an involving talk, and only at the end to surprise the spectator with the information that all those experiences could be lived in one single place: Portugal. And, considering that the campaign is directed mainly for the European public, the goal seems to be also to emphasize that all these experiences may be lived right around the corner, in a neighbour country, any time of the year, including winter.

It is offered to the spectator a sample (ironically through a computer screen) in a bit more than three minutes, of experiences and emotions to be discovered in one single

trip: it could be diving into the blue sea, to walk through well preserved natural sceneries or to find a mysterious woman in an almost untouched environment. Utilizing a logic of “positive typification” (Gastaldo, 2013) from the presented reality by the touristic advertising, there are no queues, crowded people, traffic, street vendor, nothing that reminds the old grey life of the big urban or touristic centres. The images suggest that all that is on hold waiting to be “discovered”. Understanding that touristic advertising operates under a logic of anticipation of the experience to be lived, Conceição (1998, p. 72) considers that it shows what the tourist intends to find, transforming the travel in something that thinks “the universe, the tastes and aspirations of whom wishes to leave”. From this understanding, we may notice that the campaign *Can't Skip Portugal*, intend to offer a foresight in a way to fill up lacks, anguishes and dissatisfactions for those who will leave in search of more emotions, inspirations and new starts.

The character narrative, along with images of an inhospitable place, in a natural environment to be discovered, at this and on the other promoting videos of this campaign, seems to try to satisfy consumer's desires

to regain of their own pleasures, to live the experience in a more personal way, not conducted, not orchestrated by the market (...) If sometimes prefers the directed simulation of real at random, engages even more in rediscovering the ‘authenticity’ of nature, to manage his or her own leisure in an individualized manner. (Lipovetsky, 2007, p. 55)

We may also deduce, through the character and the spectacular images from the sea, that there is a reference, even not a direct one, to the great navigations and Portuguese ultramarines discoveries – however, this time, the one who will explore and discover new experiences is the traveller who goes to Portugal.

Nonetheless, the “consumption of experience” in the chosen approach by Tourism of Portugal to attract the eye and, moreover, the visit from the tourist to the country, does not meet the definition categories proposed by Pereira, Siciliano and Rocha (2015, p. 6), once does not suggests the existence of a “physical or virtual (...) intentionally repaired so that he experience sensations, emotions and impressions within a delimited and punctual” or even “a previously ritualized preparation, (...) suspension of disbelief faces to ludic aspects, magical or imaginative which will be, at that place, presented as ‘simulacrum’”, among other particular aspects by the mentioned authors. However, is undeniable the reference to live the experiences in an idealized natural scenario (with a beach which one can swim peacefully in the middle of European winter, for example) to be discovered by a lonely tourist. The main character narrative relates directly to the realization of the travel as a needed experience to feel “alive”, and literally escape from a stressful and little interesting routine to discover new feelings as the “sun burning your back” or “a cold wind on the top of the mountain”.

Besides, from the moment the tourist-consumer, seduced by images and speeches available through the computer screen, wishes to obtain more information on how one can “buy” this offered experiences, it can be found, at the YouTube video description

some links. Among which is the website of Visit Portugal⁶, which the user will have access to more information over Portugal's regions, destinies and touristic attractions.

It was created also a *hotsite* developed specifically for the campaign⁷, with versions in six different languages (English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian and German). On this website, the interested tourist on Portugal destination, will have access to a “emotional guidance of travel” with the subtitle “Feel and discover an emotion-based itinerary. Life is better when you don't skip it”. From the emotion or state of mind which it best defines or inspires you, the website will lead you to the experiences and places in Portugal more suitable to your desires.

Thus, on the emotion menu, the future tourist may choose how to feel: *peaceful, relaxed, glamorous, joyful, extravagant, playful, amazed, curious, excited, alive, healthy, romantic, cheerful, adventurous, energetic, creative or delighted*. Therefore, are offered, as a virtual shelf, emotions and experiences, to be lived on the different presented places.

In light of this emotional guide, we made a brief exercise clicking on some of the options to observe what is offered. For example, when putting “extravagant”, the website opens a new page, with vibrant colours (red and purple), the word extravagant highlighted and, below it, the text: “free your spirit and enjoy the good life in Portugal – The food and wine, the spas, the shopping. You're up for some treats. Come and find out why!” At the same page, there are three pictures, each one of them identified with their own hashtag. One with an image of a man looking at a valley, while holding a glass of wine and the caption #Wine. The other image is of a woman in the lotus position, apparently meditating, beside a river or lake, and the caption #Wellness. On the third picture there's an image of food with seafood placed in a *cataplana*, typical Portuguese utensil used at Portuguese culinary and the caption #Gastronomy. From your own interest, the website user clicks on the picture to have access to more information. Clicking, for example, in the picture identified as #Wellness, we are diverted to a page from the website of Visit Portugal⁸ with the title “Days of well-being in a spa” and information around spa, resorts and hotel programs, distributed across North, Centro and Algarve.

However, if we wish, simply to feel “alive”, we click, among 18 options from emotion guide of available travels, at the option “alive”. In a page with shades of blue, green and yellow, is promised to us “great *meals, unforgettable sights, exciting activities. In Portugal feeling alive is mandatory*”. The hashtags #SunAndSea (with a picture of a person walking in a desert beach), #CityBreak (and the image of a man, alone, at Ribeira do Porto) and #FamilyHolidays (with an image of young people/children in a beach).

The emotional travel guide presents itself, therefore, as a different travel guide comparing to traditional books of its genre – which normally bring texts and images regarding the main local touristic attractions, including tips of tours, restaurants, museums or other “unmissable” places. The emotional guide is focused on the emotions

⁶ Available at www.visitportugal.com

⁷ Available at www.cantskipportugal.com/pt

⁸ Available at www.visitportugal.com.br

and experiences which the consumer wants to live and, from there, it shows what to do and where to go. What will guide you is not the destination definition, but the emotional choices that the traveller chooses to buy.

The emotions and the “way of life” as options of choice present a direction for the pseudo idea of individuality. This trend of individuality and personalization is exponential to the contemporary touristic experiences. However, this personalization is nothing more than the application of the (re) significance of a massive product to an individual aspect. Such strategy may be observed in this and others contemporary touristic campaigns, with the aim to arouse emotions and senses for the immediate consumption of will, which awakes the consumption desire. This consumption signs game is only possible though the digital technology advent, which is transforming the place of culture and consequently tourism.

The emotions and sensorial feelings given by the computer’s screens will be able to be lived *in loco*. The future consumer-tourist had just a brief “sample”, through images and involving talks promising a transforming travel. In case you decide to depart, you will have the opportunity to explore, for yourself, what you desire to feel. However, we propose the following reflections: is it possible to purchase an emotion? Can be travelling the materialization of experiences which craves the individuals on the escape of their boring or stressful daily life? Can we take with us this set of lived experiences in a trip and, at the end, arrive better and more motivated to face up the chaotic day by day? These questions seem to confirm the complexity of touristic and consumption of experience as an object to be consumed at the contemporary age.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In an attempt to understand how the transformations on tourism and leisure consumption and contemporary tourism are represented and powered by the touristic promotional discourse, we approach the advertising film *Can't Skip* using theoretical considerations from the Sociology of Tourism and of Culture regarding the “consumption of experience” and a perspective of Cultural Studies. Integrated to the online campaign of Turismo de Portugal entitled *Can't Skip Portugal*, we note that this video articulates a strategy of attraction and seduction through the use of beautiful images of the country and a narrator character that invites viewers to feel and discover new through the realization of a journey.

As there are no symbolic elements or signs that refer directly to Portugal, for example, historical constructions such as churches, towers or castles, or other elements of Portuguese culture usually associated with this country (such as *fado*, *vira*, *azulejos*, among others), the discourse promoted through this promotional video divulges the country as a destination capable of offering experiences and providing emotions and sensations to the visitor. In this way, the consumption of experience, although it does not refer to an earlier imagery alluding to this country, nor does it offer a space created specifically for the experience, is present in the universe of sense built in the campaign, either through advertising films or through of the hotsite and its “menu of emotions”,

because it refers to the idea that the realization of a trip is more linked to the experiences and emotions than to the “passive” contemplation of tourist attractions already diffused about this tourist destination previously.

To conclude, from these considerations regarding the representations contained in this campaign that aims to promote international tourism in Portugal, we suggest studies about its production context, including the marketing policies that underpinned it, as well as the reception processes, both by the tourist public, as well as by the residents of the commercial tourist destinations. Moreover, it seems to be relevant to understand the complexity of tourism making to analyse also the impacts that certain modes of representation of places, cultures and their inhabitants have, as integral parts of objects of consumption of experience.

Translation: Erika Martins

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