Chapter 1

Cultural E–Tourism Depicted by Digital Discourse: Innovative Mobilities at Urban E–Heritage Networks

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to reflect on cultural e-tourism and the regimes of innovative discourses about this process. Cultural e-tourists look for fruition in what regards the cultural e-heritage, which means the cultural heritage propagated through the discourses of digital media and cyberspace, but in connection with physical mobilities and urban institutional discourses. Mobilities refer to processes, actors and things that are on the move within our contemporary society, namely across social and discursive networks. The author also presents some previous personal research about leisure, tourism, urban cultures and arts, that compared pre-modern, modern, and post-modern configurations of tourism’s processes. Projects on this subject should be more debated among social science scientists, tourism professionals, and citizens. In particular, projects about innovative mobilities and cultural e-heritage discourses at diverse localities, where local public policies intend to constitute them as smart cities and as UNESCO Creative cities.

INTRODUCTION

Everything is on the move. When tourists travel among localities, they translate their departure’s working timetables into destination’s leisure rhythms. When they return to their home, tourists undertake the inverse process, that is, they impregnate their countries and cultures with foreign sensibilities. Those permuted spaces and times themselves are also being displaced via the tourists imaginary, before, during, and after the actual voyage. And, last but not the least, society itself is changing owed to the pressure of cyberspace phenomena. One of such metamorphoses is the emerging e-tourism phenomenon. The

present essay aims to circumscribe its cultural dimension, i.e., cultural e-tourism, and the innovative discourses on that subject.

For these aims, firstly this chapter includes a theoretical background that identifies the state of the art of core discussions on concepts associated with mobilities. This is one of the most influent social processes and sociological notions that contextualize cultural e-tourism activated within the Internet, and the innovative discourses produced and reproduced on this subject.

Next, the chapter’s main focus is concentrated on the debate about cultural e-tourism and heritage. Controversies relevant to this theme articulate tourism with new media and social networks. And some suggestions about solutions and recommendations involve the articulation of Tourism Studies’ projects to new contemporary processes and sociological methods activated by cyberspace and social networks.

Some paramount ideas and works of this area are convoked especially those authors who develop and clarify the meaning of the core concepts that structure the present object of studies. For example, mobilities refer to processes, actors, and things that are currently on the move within our contemporary society, such as tourists, capitals, workers, images, heritage, places, etc. A core concept associated with mobilities is cultural e-tourism; i.e., a genre if tourism activated by new media and cyberspace flows and travels. Cultural e-tourists look for fruition in what regards the cultural e-heritage. This notion means the cultural heritage propagated through digital media and across the Internet, at web pages, wikis, digital networks, etc. (Andrade, 2013a). For instance, digital art is emerging as a growing niche in tourism demand, through performances at public city spaces (museums, etc.). Particularly, artistic works using digital mobile devices are frequent since some years ago, following a recent exponential increase of tourism activities in Portugal and in specific Portuguese cities, such as Lisbon, Porto and Braga.

Such cultural e-tourism is being practised through discursive digital networks, which may be understood as webs of social meanings disseminated through languages, messages, and campaigns promoted by some type of e-institution. This genre of institution operates in cyberspace under specific circumstances, such as the location of its own company headquarters inside the WWW. Yet, when discursive networks users apply a critique posture, they may create discursive innovations, which are social or institutional processes including the communication of conditions, objectives, means, methods and effects regarding creative cultural transformations but also social inclusion (Andrade, 2015).

Moreover, discursive digital networks intensively apply Internet marketing for tourism businesses. The articulation of digital culture, e-tourism and managerial strategies is debated in Lytras (2011). And Susan Sweeney (2000) suggests diversified practical and most useful strategies for each market niche, from bed and breakfast, or country inns, to tour operators, motels, and hotels, and not even forgetting theme parks and outdoor adventures promoters.

In a global context, discursive digital webs often reformulate social and semantic meanings of intercultural and even transcultural nature, inside a post colonialist global world (Andrade, 2014).

Sometimes, discursive digital webs mix the two precedent strategies, such as applying tourism marketing to non-Western societies and cultures. E.g. Faraj (2014) analyses e-tourism in Lebanon, concretely through preferences expressed by tourism industry, travel agencies and consumers, and by reflecting on the possible cooperation among these stakeholders.

The present chapter also introduces a former research undertaken by this chapter’s author about leisure, tourism, urban cultures and arts, developed for several years, that compared pre-modernity, modernity, and post-modernity expressions of tourism social contexts, agents, and practises (see below Andrade, 1986, 1993).