

everyday life (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Yet, Brock, Raby, and Thomas (2012, p.313) argue that as tourists are predominantly Western, the ability to gaze upon/consume *Other* places/people is a result of privileging factors such as class, ethnicity, and nationality. Moreover, the gaze is consequently shaped by Western discourses regarding such places/people which are dispersed and facilitated by the growth and development of information technologies such as the internet. Despite global developments the constructs of the non-Western remain at large Western constructs as opposed to social realities (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000a). Such discourse and imagery place the West at the “centre of the world” and shape the “cultural lens” (Urry and Larsen, 2011) from which tourists are able to gaze upon/interpret the rest of the world, or the 'Other', as sites of visual and physical consumption (Brock, Raby and Thomas, 2012, p.313).

For the purpose of this analysis, an oversimplified understanding of the male and tourist gaze is necessary in order to explicitly demonstrate how the application of such theories can provide a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary phenomena of sex tourism. Thus, as the male gaze involves men gazing upon women, and the tourist gaze implies tourists gazing upon the exotic Other; within the context of sex tourism which involves Western male tourists gazing and consuming the 'inferior' exotic female Other, both gazes evidently overlap and become the 'male tourist gaze'. This, Pritchard and Morgan (2000a)

argue, has become the dominant and most privileged gaze within the tourism industry. Places/spaces are gendered social constructions as opposed to mere geographical locations. Thus, sex tourism destinations are constructed in order to satisfy the male tourist gaze, which is evidently commodified and the object of the gaze is consequently consumed both visually and physically as a result (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000a). Thus, unequal power relations of gender, class and ethnicity are perpetuated as a result of sex tourism which is arguably based upon and

privileges the male tourist gaze at the expense of the Other.

Preponderantly, sex tourism takes place in 'third world' regions such as Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean (O'Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor, 1999) where sex tourists “use their economic power to attain powers of sexual command over local women [...] while travelling for leisure purposes” (O'Connell Davidson, 1998 p.75 cited in Sanders, 2010, p.111). This elucidates unequal power relations with regards to class and gender as those with the ability to gaze/consume are Western males as opposed to the female non-western prostitute. The current epoch is defined by globalisation which is arguably characterised by the rapid flow of bodies (amongst other things) across national/international borders (Wonders and Michalowski, 2001). This is apparent in the mobilities of both sex tourists and female migrants



who are seeking work in popular sex tourist destinations, often as a result of poverty. Although it could be argued people have always travelled for work, the growing number of women trafficked from 'exotic' areas and forced into prostitution could arguably be linked to the increasing male demand for 'difference' which is an integral factor of the male tourist gaze (Skrobanek, Boonpakdi, Janthakeero, 1997).

The gendered nature of such spaces/places is arguably a result of traditional patriarchal

notions of sexuality such as the active male and passive female. Travel and tourism were thus regarded as masculine and a (wealthier, Western) male

phenomenon, deemed too dangerous for women. Accordingly, female movement was traditionally restricted to the private sphere of the home and women excluded from the construction of such public spaces/places. Hence, it could be argued, tourists areas, particularly sex tourism destinations are constructed by and for the dominant tourist, Western men and based upon their male tourist gaze which is the visual (and

physical) consumption of the exotic, female, Other (Hayllar, Griffin, and Edwards, 2008, p.79).

A pertinent example of the privileging of the male tourist gaze is Amsterdam, a popular sex tourist destination. The main attraction of the city is undoubtedly the countless windows displaying scantily clad women of all varieties (which could arguably be compared to the setting of a zoo or aquarium, thus dehumanising women) in which male tourists gaze upon and visually consume the bodies of such women. Sex tourists then have the economic 'power' to *choose* a body to physically consume (Wonders and Michalowski, 2001). "Travel and tourism can be thought of as a search for difference" and through the male sex tourist gaze, women are the epitome of difference (Rojek and Urry, 1997, p.17). However, this does not explain the need to travel as prostitution is apparent in almost all societies. However, *generally*, prostitutes within the home country of sex tourists are of the same nationality and/or ethnicity thus, the ultimate form of difference is found in the exotic non-western female 'Other', who is also in a weaker position of power as a result of poverty. The exoticisation and eroticisation of 'third world' women has reinforced racial and gendered stereotypes of such women as passive, docile, uninhibited, but also untainted by feminism. As a result of the women's movement in the West it is argued that women have gained excessive powers over their sexuality as even prostitutes now have boundaries. Yet through the consumption of the exotic other men are able to "reaffirm" their masculinity through the sexual domination of a true inferior in places with (preconceived/assumed) differing sexual norms (O'Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor, 1999, p.38).

Western representations of the exotic woman and landscape coincide as they are both commodified and sexualised as a market response to the privileged male gaze, luring men into travelling to such destinations. 'Third world' but not 'first world' landscapes are sexualised and feminised as a result as "woman becomes nature and nature becomes woman" (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000a, p.892). Thus patriarchal myths of femininity are utilised to portray such destinations as passive/mysterious and sexual imagery is heavily applied in order to appeal to the gaze (Pritchard

and Morgan 2000b). Yet, depicting the Other as feminine reinforces gender differences and thus inequalities, highlighting the patriarchal bias of tourism discourse (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000a). Tourism is reliant upon "myths and fantasies" which are commodified as opposed to social reality/'authenticity'. Hence, racial and gendered stereotypes are reinforced, perpetuating prevailing power relations in regards to class, gender, ethnicity and nationality in order to create a certain image of the Other which appeals to the constructed male tourist gaze (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000a, p.891).

To conclude, sex tourist destinations are gendered social constructions which are created, promoted and consumed by and for the dominant tourist, that is, the white, Western male. Western men travel to 'third world' countries in order to visually and physically consume difference in the form of the exotic female Other. This highlights how both the male and tourist gaze overlap and form a 'male tourist gaze' which is privileged within tourist discourses and which perpetuates racial and gendered stereotypes. Tourism is reliant upon myths and fantasies as opposed to truths therefore such places/women are constructed in an eroticised manner, luring men into travel. The sex tourist industry allows the privileged Western, male to exploit their dominant gender, class, ethnicity and nationality as the inferior female Other becomes the sexualised object of gaze and consumption, evidently reinforcing unequal power relations as a result.

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Picture 1:

http://www.123rf.com/photo_16739958_abstract-word-cloud-for-sex-tourism-with-related-tags-and-terms.html

Picture 2:

http://www.123rf.com/photo_14534011_orange-and-blue-flag-painted-on-face-of-a-sport-team-supporter-close-up-of-a-male-eye.html