

A Critical Review on "Image"-based Tourism:

A Case of Slow Traveler

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Abstract:

This essay is based on a critical review of dominant form of tourism industry that causes a system of meaning, making as consequences of reproducing of 'image' in media. Images of promised destinations bombard us everywhere, on billboards, small advertisement bar on social networks websites, on magazine and even in movies and TV series in designated smart way.

These images define what we should experience when we are in such destinations and at the same time affirm any other forms of experience which is not recognized in these matrixes of images are not welcome. This means for example the meaning of safety and comfort in a travel is only achieved by the way that has been already constructed in media through series of campaigns of a special tourism agency. One can say this mechanism forces us to accept that there is no other ways of having comfortable travel without going by airplanes and tourist packages without accommodating in hotels, without going to designated touristic areas in destination and so on and so forth.

Here I draw on other alternative ways of doing travel like Slow tourism as a way of breaking such image making system in media as well as a way of experiencing what seems to be un-experience-able. For this I conducted a series of interviews with an experienced slow traveler who cycled several times between various countries. This essay is a qualitative/analytical text based on experiences of one slow traveler and critical reviews of literature provided in this area.

Keywords: Image, Media, Meaning, Slowness, Slow Tourism, experience

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1.Introduction

1.1. Background and problem discussion

We know that tourism is a service industry and from the middle of 20th century has become one of the most popular forms of spending free time. This phenomenon which is considered as one of the most successful forms of financial investment, occupies and shapes other contexts as well. One of these contexts is aesthetical form of everyday life. Tourism due to its dynamic form of choices, has become one form of “life style” which like arts, fashion and entertainment is entangled to a group of aesthetical values such as diet, self body image and personal interests. (Chaney, 1996 & Bennet, 2005)

A tourist by choosing where to go, in fact expresses her interests which are not really shaped by real decision. This thesis argues one of the most effective factors for making decision is media and the way audiences of media make images of destinations in their mind. This in tourism industry is considered as one of platform for generating new marketing strategies, but from sociology point of view, it is exactly where an imaginary place -that has no link to real place- is made in the mind of tourist. Therefore, the whole process of visiting becomes a relieved moment of what tourist has made in his mind before experiencing the place. This results in lack of other forms of experiencing ‘the other’ place.

But there are other alternative forms of experiencing places, which try to understand, experience and perceive these ‘other’ moments in a new and different way from what has been the most popular form, the ‘packaged experience of travel’. This essay will look into one of this form called Slow Tourism and by bringing up one example of such way of traveling tries to understand how other types of traveling could be possible in order to understand other cultures, values and norms.

1.2. Purpose and research questions

This essay tries to understand what are the negative aspects of making ‘good, safe and comfortable’ images of destination in the mind of potential tourists. In order to explore the

meaning of Slow travel as an alternative way to step beyond the stereotypes when experiencing a destination. This study aims to find the answer the following questions:

- How can we interrupt the process of image making to experience something out of such marketing system?
- How can we reshape and recreate the meaning of a “good trip” through other ways?
- How can we experience more layers of a destination than all layers we have seen already in media?

Thus, these three research questions are based at the core of attention during the whole text. Also they are the main ingredients as guidelines while doing the interview for the case study. Indeed, the very main point of this study was to point out a very essential issue which in today`s life has changed its authenticity, and I call it the missing taste of a real experience, the taste of deepening the experience. Thus, this concern is touched upon through an academic research.

Moreover, in this study I have tried to emphasis on how mass media in harmony with today`s consuming society inundates us with advice on where to go and what to do to, and how it tries to portray the places differently that it effects people (i.e. choosing a destination with the aim of going to specific attraction or activities).(Nadeau, Heslop, Norm & Luk.2008)

The main motivation behind writing this thesis was based on my own personal interest and concerns. I wanted to bring up an important issue in tourism studies which have been less discussed and as Beerli & Martin (2004) argue the empirical studies about reasoning the individual`s image of a destination are not a lot. At the same time, slow movement triggered me to link this to tourism, in order to have an alternative option to skip a mediated experience.

1.3. Essay outline

First in the introduction section, the reader will be given a background of the problem , detailed analysis of problem statement formulating the three main research questions, then followed by the objectives and purpose. This study has some limitations which is presented.

The second chapter is dedicated to literature review of relevant sources for this subject. As a result, after reading this part the reader will get to know different concepts such as image, the roles of media in making image, phenomena of media in modern and lately post-modern societies briefly. Later I focus on the effect of media on individuals and collective form of life. From here I examine the process of image making in the mind of tourists before going to a destination and in general how image and media can effect and shape the experiences for a traveler. Later the slow movement and more specifically slow tourism will be introduced as an alternative solution to escape from a mediated experience.

The following chapter will outline the methodology, explaining constructive how the research was conducted. This is necessary to consider while making the result. Case study will be presented in this section and the analysis of the case will be discussed based on the literatures. Finally the main findings will be concluded and how important it is not to commercialized the outcome of the slow travel.

1.4. Limitations

As a critical subject, image-based tourism has a broad perspective and this important subject can be discussed and analyzed from different angles. Also it is obvious about numerous solutions in order to escape from mediated images. However, I have limited the solution to focus on slow travel as a sub-division of slow movement.

Also, it is important to keep this in mind, Slow travel as a very new subject, it has not been developed enough. Thus, the researcher had to limit the research based on the few available resources.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Media and Image Media:

2.1.1.the distortion of image

Today, our definitions of goods and bads, ugly and beautiful are shaped by images most of which extracted from Media industry. We see a billboard, a TV commercial or an advertisement on a daily newspaper showing us how to experience a place, a city or a touristic destination in order to achieve a safe, comfortable and memorable trip. All in all, it is a forceful system of meanings and images which are produced for us while at the same time reduce our ability and humanity to experience beyond the border of this system, which is not experienced yet. Or let`s say we have to follow these images and meanings in order to feel/define safety, comfort, happiness and relaxation. All these happen in so-called postmodern era when there is no utopia nor an ideology and end of history shows up itself as Fukuyama argues.(1989)

“In postmodernity, therefore, the ‘real’ world has imploded into a state of hyperreality, a hallucinogenic simulation of the non-existent, a place where boundaries collapse, opposites coalesce, fact and fiction are fused, and theory and practice metamorphose.” (Brown, 1995, p. 80)

Moreover, in his ‘*Discourse or Figure? Postmodernism as a Regime of Signification*’ Scott Lash(1988) mentioned, the post modern era is the turning point for “literary” which mostly changed into visual where this visual speaks louder than words; where the first hand effectiveness and success in absorbing more attention is with images than words . Today, by looking around at this stage one can totally feels the dominant culture of image and its hegemony compared to the existing narratives.

One can say TV (Today TV is not just a box, but also all streaming video channels on internet are considered as TV) is the most accessible source of image-bombarding. Although TV as one of the mediators of such image reproduction of culture is an outcome of modernism era but its function reaches at highest level in our time, the postmodern condition.

It has been more than half a century that through the so called Media tool- TV- change the relationship between human beings and his/her world around dramatically. TV replaces the meaning of 'reality' with the given images and their meanings though. And almost after World War II this Media tool saved a corner in every one`s home so that today it is far from thoughts to imagine the absence of this 'magic box' in one`s place and the time-amount [hours] consumed to deal with the images. As a result, a large part of social science researches have been focused on TV [Media] , its products and its social effects. (<http://anthropology.ir/node/7133>)

2.1.2. Reality or de-realization

"The impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real is of the same order as the impossibility of staging illusion"
(Baudriall-1981)

For most of the people if not all, Media is the main source for making the real out of different subjects. This subject can be a governor, a leader, someone who cannot be seen in person; and/or a situation, an event or an accident in other part of the world where would not be accessible in the first action unless relying on the Media. Within this space the behavior of the person is shaped in order to interact with this world and to define/achieve the desirable experiences on a daily basis. In other words, Media manipulate the stage for the person to experience the world in a larger scale compare to the scale that can be done personally and physically for different aims such as business, social networking, news and information, recreation and entertainment .(Bowen & Santos, 2006)

Media in general, defines another world to its audience where the borders between the reality and distortion can be easily removed. In this world made by Media the new realities can be defined and handed out in order to picture a new image about any given subject.

In line with this fact, Bowen & Santos (2006) argue about the two worlds we live in: the Real world and the Media world. The Real world is the very space of direct interaction of the people with people, locations and events. The real is something that can be felt, smelled, tasted; the electrical signal interpretation by the brain. They also believe in order to fulfill the level of knowledge about the Real world and obtain experiences, most of we people see the answers of such challenges in the Media world, where there are always sources for experiences and

information. And as soon as the desirable answers achieves in this Media world, it is time to bring them back into Real world. Thus, most of the time people are crossing the borders between these two worlds which makes it hard to characterize the world we live in.

One of the recent examples of this fact would be the latest breaking news of Bin Laden raid¹ which according to almost all of the news agencies President Barack Obama watched the mission from the White House.(appendix1.) According to BBC *“Helmet-mounted cameras mean live video can be sent direct from the front line back to headquarters. This technology enabled military and intelligence chiefs to closely monitor the developing situation as US Navy Seals raided Osama Bin Laden's compound in Pakistan.”* (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-13276467>) . This continued by over publishing the images of the famous Situation room of the White House showing Obama with few U.S officials were following every sequence of the mission.

In this sense, it would not be surprising when one would re-create and adjust the typical Hollywood movies (such as Independence Day, Armageddon, etc.) in mind with a heroic sound track and a waving national flag on the background, while watching such things. As a result, Media would act as re-production tool for the images of such Hollywood movies and develop the very hyper-reality of meanings where the line between the fantasy and the real is simulated transparent. As Jean Baudrillard(1981) defines hyper-reality as *“The simulation of something which never really existed”* he continues that the surprising part is not about the differences of details in the real and the fake ones but in opposite the lack of differences or better said simulation between these two would be the surprise.

To this end, images (pictures specially) can be easily distorted. Referring to the famous - aforementioned-Situation room of the White House picture on 1st of May 2011, where nervous, serious and curious faces can be viewed, the same frame can be used in other contexts such as watching the last minute of the football match, a horror movie, or an impressive documentary, etc.

¹ In the 1st of May 2011, the US president Barak Obama, announced the death of Osama Bin Laden by the US troops in this very counter-terrorism mission in Pakistan.

Moreover, Slavoj Zizek (2002) continues the elaboration of this fact in 'Welcome to the Desert of the Real':

“So it is not only that Hollywood stages a semblance of real life deprived of the weight and inertia of materiality - in late-capitalist consumerist society, 'real social life' itself somehow acquires the features of a staged fake, with our neighbors behaving in 'real' life like stage actors and extras.... Again, the ultimate truth of the capitalist utilitarian despiritualized universe is the dematerialization of 'real life' itself, its reversal into a spectral show.”

On TV, what is always occupied is 'Time'. As a highly 'rare commodity', these minutes are spent on banal subjects to give them more color and value while hiding many other important facts behind. Based on this fact, banality becomes important as a role to hide many other information. As Pierre Bourdieu (1999) mentioned, the vast majority of people follow TV as the main source for information and they do trust on it while other sources such as news papers are not read on the same level as with TV. Therefore, TV indeed acts as the tool for shaping and defining the reality which ends up in crafting the big part of the imagination in a given society.

In fact, Bourdieu tried to emphasize on the hiding ability of TV by showing. This contradiction means if TV is supposed to act as a reliable source for information, it pictures either things which should not, or showing the 'must shows' in an unimportant way not to be noticed nor has a very different meaning when comparing it with reality.

Above all, different actors in Media take the role of managers of public's conscience leading on what to think and what not to think.

The process of image making, which happens over time and space, is basically an orchestration of meaning and values, which contradicts, with values of 'the other'. What have been imposed to us as valuable achievements of our societies, our civilized life, becoming the main legitimized model for progress, which does not allow to unfolding of any other forms of meaning. The

values in society are appreciated if considered in categories that have been introduced through media and unrecognized values remain untouched or defined as threatening.

One classical example of such value making, based on images that are produced in media is self-body image among females.

By presenting a huge amount of 'perfect woman' on TV Series, magazines covers, movies, music industry, advertisements etc., one compares her body image to what has been shown to her as the most beautiful and satisfied body for attraction and attention. She therefore becomes unsatisfied with her body and led her to eating disorder and depression. (Hawkins, et al. 2004)

As we discussed, what called 'image' is basically a mental perception through visuals, texts, norms and values, which usually led by media. Such images are engraved in the mind of people as the only and true way of existing facts. The image of a beautiful woman would be considered as someone young, slim, long and curvy and a fat, masculine, short woman would be considered as an ugly one. A Middle Eastern man in Western societies would be seen as masculine, violent, scary man who does not appreciate woman rights and perhaps will be a potential terrorists.

Images are constructed over time and distributed over spaces both intentionally and unconsciously. Any attempt to break this system of images, which consequently defines values as good and bad, civilized and uncivilized, developed and undeveloped, etc. would be pushed to margins of societies where alternatives emerge.

Tourism like most of service industries are based on a system of images which by that, tourism policies push their profit by speeding up such image system. Making image of safety, comfortably and fun moments is the very first skill of tourism planners. One could say, tourism planning basically becomes the task of making meanings and values for a destination even fake to make a destination popular.

One of the recent examples of such is the huge amount of advertisements for Egypt. Before the revolution images were represented a comfortable and safe place, perhaps the most safe one among all other Arab countries where you can experience the east, the oriental night and so on. During the Arab spring all images were disappeared for couple of months and at the time this

text is written still there is no advertisement for Egypt in public (in Sweden). In fact the structure of the Egyptian society before and over the protests were the same, but from tourism industry point of view, a tourist coming from outside is not supposed to see Egypt as a whole but a tiny slice of Egypt, which is completely unreal. A one-week-travel to Egypt by a hygienic process of getting into airplane, taken by taxi or couch to a hotel and daily activities of going to sites and back to hotel will not be a travel to Egypt but a travel to another Egypt that has been advertised here for us, An Egypt based on images that were shown to us. Therefore, we do not want to see another Egypt; we would like to see the one has been shown to us in order to feel we paid for something that was promised. The reason that there was no advertisement for Egypt during protests was not basically because Egypt was dangerous and one tourist perhaps would get shot there, but in contrary the reason was that over revolution time the whole structure of society - image structures among many- were completely changed and suspended for a while. The Egypt was a real Egypt by that time and did not let tourism industry to make an imaginary promised Egypt in such Egypt. Making our mental Egypt was not possible at all. Perhaps later this would be possible again.

2.2. Tourism, Media, Image

It has been more than half a century that the act of tourism and traveling are more publicized in forms of leisure and recreation. This fact is so wide spread so that very large amount of people has experienced it and the conspicuous consumption of travelling has become inconspicuous. In a modern society the act of travelling is an obvious dimension which has been taken for granted. Plus, it is obvious and predictable that it has become an inseparable part of the human activities in a modern society. The act of being tourist is the fact which its absence in the list a year activity is far from expectations in today`s wealthy life.

In fact, the possibility of ‘going on holiday’ or a ‘break’ has shaped one of the characteristics of a modern resident. People specifically in modern societies are always trying to find a time to escape from routines in everyday life and one of the best available solutions is to travel. Although this could end up in considering travel as another routine activity in long term.

Dominating travel and tourism in one's activity is partly the result of the advancement of technology as well which by that many alternatives have been discovered in order to ease the ways of traveling and finally has become the reason of the existence of variety in tourism and traveling.

Based on this fact, Bennet (2005) believes by the end of twentieth century Tourism became one of the largest global industries and it is highly significant in economics.

However, apart from its economic importance, tourism has an aesthetic value in today's societies, where the effect of a built 'image' is the main factor for judging and evaluating a destination from tourist's point of view. According to Bennet (2005), today the tourist destinations and types of tourism are so much various so that one can accept it as a part of the 'lifestyle' where it could connect to other platforms such as art, clothing, the type of chosen food to eat, values, personal interests etc. to share the aesthetic values among different contexts.

Accordingly, there are different forms of experiencing a travel depending on different personalities with different values. There is a harmony between types of leisure activities, consuming method, personal values and choosing the 'type of tourist' one would prefer to be. One with her or his own interests, values and life style projects his/her own image of values to destination which ends up to experiencing the destination in a way she/ he experience her/his own city. The only factor that is changed is the geography and context of experience which is another city.

People start to perceive different images of many destinations. It is suggested that an image of a destination is a very important factor in increasing the popularity of the destination among tourists (Mowforth & Munt, 2003).

The image of a destination held by tourists is not only shaped after visiting the destination but also shaped in advance as a result of many factors influencing the image. One important factor is to what extent the destination builds and presents its image to tourists. According to Mercille (2005), there are several factors influencing the destination image shaped among existing and potential tourists, e.g. traditional media channels such as film, programs, magazines,

advertisement, travel brochures, etc; personal advice from relatives or friends who have been to or know about the destination; and also the actual visitation to the destination (Mercille, 2005).

The above examples of factors influencing the image are of significant importance in terms of impact on destination image making. This will affect tourists' ideas and feelings towards the destination and their motivation to go there and in general on the whole experience during the act of travel.

Probably this idea has been well-explained by the Swiss author, Alain De Botton (2002), in "the art of travel", where he discovers his own experience of being effected by a picturesque colorful brochure about Barbados and how the content of such brochure encouraged him to make this travel. The attractive front picture of the brochure was a line of embowed palm trees along side of a sandy beach on a sunny day, with a nice blue sea in front and the chained hills on the background. While looking at this picture, De Botton indeed recalls a famous painting by William Hodges which became even more famous after being exhibited during the winter peak in the Royal Cultural Center in London. Gazing at painting gave an effective sense of warmth, happiness and relaxation. Thereafter, the painting location became the utopia for romanticizing the travelling to tropics. Paging a travel brochure showing the palms, silver beaches and blue sea, especially in a cold winter day, can tickle anyone`s will. In this sense, it is also a bitter truth that how easily one can accept a very unreal picture and putting him/her self on that frame, enjoying a very nice tropic atmosphere in a day dreaming while at the same time being aware of the unreal (or if it is real it is only a part of a whole) situation. Indeed, what considers to be the experience at a destination might defined by travel brochures.

From the view of tourists, every individual has the power to individually interpret destinations presented to them. Tourists' personal characteristics are factors influencing the individual interpretation of the destination. These characteristics such as tourists' own needs, prior knowledge on destination or travelling experience before or after visiting the destination are then affecting the creation of a destination image. Merging these perspectives, i.e. the image presented by the destination, influences from media and the characteristics and knowledge of the tourists the interaction between them will form the perceived image of the tourist destination (Beerli& Martín, 2004; Mercille, 2005).

Needless to say that one of the most influential literature regarding tourist experience is “Tourist Gaze” of John Urry (2002) . Referring to this book, in the contemporary societies which are highly saturated by media, perceptions about different countries and specific locations, before anything else are shaped by images produced by media. This considerably effects/forms the primary experience and some sort of pre-experienced images.

“Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially through day-dreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures [...] Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, newspapers, TV, magazines, records and videos which construct the gaze [...] what is then seen is interpreted in terms of these pre-given categories.” (Urry 1995:132)

As a result, the practice of being a tourist would provide an opportunity to explore the ‘infected’ images and find them in reality which is shaped before the act of travel and this is where Urry (2002) uses the term ‘ephemerality of experience’. Indeed, the tourist is willing to reproduce the experience of being in a given destination (or a given location) which he/she already have done the experience through the imagination. This shows that when it comes to destination perception, there exist admiration of a phantasmagoric place and fantasies.

Lagerkvist (2004) inspired by Baudrillard, exemplifies such places as the ‘simulacrum’ and or ‘hyper-real’ with the ‘filmic notion’ where the borders between imagination and reality are blurred.

Also, as Urry (1995) argues, tourist destinations like many other things in a consuming society-in the minds of tourists- are perceived as items with temporary pleasure;

“Everyone in the ‘West’ is now entitled to engage in visual consumption, to appropriate landscapes and townscapes more or less anywhere in the world” (ibid: 176)

Today as a modern atmosphere for capitalism, image is an inseparable part of almost every platform. Analytically, it is really important to keep this in mind that the creation of image is

linked in to a broad perspective in a society and their cultures and values. Putting the facts such as the context of a society, culture, and values aside, there is one thing in common with almost every society when it comes to image presentation (or better said visualization); bads are not supposed to be visualized and goods must be, in a very visible frame. In this situation where the bads must be invisible and goods should pop up, again what is considered as bad and what is known as good is produced. This reproduction of such elements, to large extent is the Media responsibility.

According to Wang (2000), one of the very main aspect of the capitalism in modern era is image packaging based on two main reasons for competition : commodity competition and image competition. This image packaging, in fact, are mostly welcomed through mass media since it is considered to be the most influential and ever-present context. To this end, images in media provide a “*symbolic environment*” .

2.2.1. ‘Image’ in Tourism Industry

“The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe” John Berger(1972)

As a subjective topic, Image is very hard to have a sole fixed definition so that it is not easy to, calculate, estimate and even evaluate it. Also prior to define image it is necessary to be aware that based on its subjectivity characteristic, image in different contexts would be evaluated differently. Thus, in order to define/analyze what image is, finding the context in which the term would be discussed is on the priority. Nevertheless, there are several definitions of image.

Literally, image has rooted in the Latin word of *imitari* (to imitate). following this pure meaning of the word image, Boorstin (1964) defines image as:

“ an image is an artificial imitation or representation of external form of any object, especially of a person”. (Boorstin 1964, p:197)

So in this sense, image is something which can be reproduced again and again. Several writers agreed that it is about representation, or describing of something which does not exist at the mean time. This description, could be about the visual appearance for instance. Accordingly, Fox (1994) divides this visual representation into two types: first as a pictorial frame, and second as a mental frame.

In fact , image is considered as the backbone of perceptible`s (i.e. thinking, listening, speaking), which at the same time is one of the main elements of guideline for mind, language and media. This means the visibility of the image is symbolized either in media (i.e. movie, photo) or in mind (when it is not physically present to be visible). (Wang 2000). In addition, it is not only about such kind of pictorial representation but beyond that it is combined with feelings, impression, attitude and beliefs about a given object.

Before linking this notion to tourism, the characteristics of image will be reviewed. Based on different literature about image characteristics, there is a general agreement on identifying the image referring to four factors: complex, multiple, relativistic, and dynamic.(Beerli and Marti`n 2004)

Moreover, if an object is not available to be viewed, it can be in the form of image, in order to be clear. When considering image, it is always simplified and does not project of what really exist due to selective characteristic visual components based on personal preferences. Henceforth, image is not protected against bias while at the same time it is vague and uncertain . Needless to say that also image is about stereotypes. The last but not the least characteristic is about how image in general ‘planned, built and communicated’ through mass media. (Wang 2000)

As stated in the beginning of this section, image can be discussed in different contexts. To be specific, image in context of tourism has an important role in experiencing of a given destination. As result, here the general image characteristic could be applicable for the context of tourism where it is defined as ‘*selective features of a place or destination*’ (Wang 2000) in this sense, tourist image which is selective cannot be reached unless the individual is from somewhere out of the given destination rather than being the resident. As mentioned earlier, image is about

impression and when it is about tourist image, it is about the impression and feelings that one can have for a place.

For example De Botton (2002) writes about Duc des Esseintes who is the main character in Huysmans novel who travelled to Amsterdam. He 'imagined' Holland the way Teniers, Jan Steen, Rembrand and Ostade depicted it. In fact, he expected Holland as an extra lively country, full of spirits with little brick yard and calm. Thus, these dream lines made him to go for this travel. However, when he faced something different of what he was inspired by the materials he had at home. In fact, paintings did not lie. There existed life, spirits and brick yards, but these were not the sole items. Instead these attraction were combined with normal life items such as restaurants, offices, same shaped buildings or normal farms that these artists never included them in their paintings. This caused Duc to find the experience of traveling in that country less impressing compared to walking in Louvre Museum where there was collected the extract of the beauty of Holland in rooms. As a result, there in the Museum he felt more to be in Holland.

Image formation in tourism can be categorized based on two main factors: physical mobility and information technologies. Each of these factors subdivides in to two main groups.

Physical mobility as its name asserts, considers the effect of 'people' in general on image formation and how different people around the person can have effect on his/her image about the whole process of his/her travel. This includes first direct personal who are grouped in two different contexts. In context of tourism sources they are tour guides, travel agencies, local people, service providers, tourist fair trades; External sources of direct personal however listed as local communities. These external sources in general are considered as autonomous actors, personal experience (other than tourism related experiences). Second section of physical mobility are Family and Friends which in context of tourism sources is about tourists and the power of word of mouth in image formation of a potential tourist or traveler. This indicates that by sharing opinion and a given frame of mind, people around the person can have an important role in this respect while the external sources are different groups such as exchange students or NGO`s.

Information technologies on the other hand is divided into virtual (two-way) and mediated (one- way). In focus, virtual information technologies in context of tourism sources is all about

the E-support, thus it is a two-way interaction. While external sources of virtual information technologies are the famous social networks such as Facebook, twitter or different blogs. The tourism sources of mediated form of information technologies include different items such as souvenirs, videos, advertising, guidebooks, travel writings. These items can effect on image making to a large extent. The effect of such things is like a one-way street where the message can be transformed from one source without waiting for the reaction. The external source however, considers news making, NGO, information, National Geographic, games, popular culture etc. (Kristina Lindstrom, 2008)

Moreover, according to Beerli and Martin(2004), there exist nine dimensions of image perception by individuals. Such classification has been done by keeping the current scale of the attraction and attributes. These nine dimensions have been listed in Table 1. determining the perceived destination image including: natural resources, general infrastructure, tourist infrastructure, tourist leisure and recreation, culture, history and art, political and economic factors, natural environment, social environment and atmosphere of the place.

Table 1. Dimensions/Attributes Determining the Perceived Destination Image (Beerli and Martin 2004)

Natural Resources	General Infrastructure	Tourist Infrastructure
Weather	Development and quality of roads, airports and ports	Hotel and self-catering accommodation
Temperature	Private and public transport facilities	Number of beds
Rainfall	Development of health services	Categories
Humidity	Development of telecommunications	Quality
Hours of sunshine	Development of commercial infrastructures	Restaurants
Beaches	Extent of building development	Number
Quality of seawater		Categories
Sandy or rocky beaches		Quality
Length of the beaches		Bars, discotheques and clubs
Overcrowding of beaches		Ease of access to destination
Wealth of countryside		Excursions at the destination
Protected nature reserves		Tourist centers
Lakes, mountains, deserts, etc.		Network of tourist information
Variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna		
Tourist Leisure and Recreation	Culture, History and Art	Political and Economic Factors
Theme parks	Museums, historical buildings, monuments, etc.	Political stability
Entertainment and sports activities	Festival, concerts, etc.	Political tendencies
Golf, fishing, hunting, skiing, scuba diving, etc.	Handicraft	Economic development
Water parks	Gastronomy	Safety
Zoos	Folklore	Crime rate
Trekking	Religion	Terrorist attacks
Adventure activities	Customs and ways of life	Prices
Casinos		
Night life		
Shopping		
Natural Environment	Social Environment	Atmosphere of the Place
Beauty of the scenery	Hospitality and friendliness of the local residents	Luxurious
Attractiveness of the cities and towns	Underprivilege and poverty	Fashionable
Cleanliness	Quality of life	Place with a good reputation
Overcrowding	Language barriers	Family-oriented destination
Air and noise pollution		Exotic
Traffic congestion		Mystic
		Relaxing
		Stressful
		Fun, enjoyable
		Pleasant
		Boring
		Attractive or interesting

In a broader sense, Tourism can be a window to shape our view about the world, and people around the world.

“tourism representation is a ‘key moment’ in the circuit of tourism discourse. The tourism image therefore emerges as one sphere into which we can look in order to understand the dialogues between,

and amongst, the creators, the consumer and the consumed [i.e. the tourist destination]. Those dialogues enable all three groups to create shared meanings and to interpret and see the world in similar ways” (Stuart Hall, 1980, p:18)

2.3. Slow Movement

“When things happen too fast, nobody can be certain about anything, about anything at all, not even about himself.”

Milan Kundera(1996)

So far, the core of attention was on the general effects of media and its role on image making and influencing the everyday life while creating new meanings of different items. Then the study continued by the effect of mass media on images in the frame of tourism where different definitions of the image were reviewed and gone through the televised space of tourists. Indicating the fact about how the act of tourism is effected by Media images and the intention of tourists to travel and visiting only the way media pictures was another critical issues reviewed up to now.

However, in order to come up with finding an escape exit from Media rules, the focus of theory revisions are shifted on to the ‘Slow Travel’ as an suitable (or sustainable) alternative way to realize the destination much better, leading to help understanding the world more wisely, shaping the art of experiencing the reality, the art of seeing, the art of interacting. There are more true when experienced individually.

In order to go through Slow Travel, first it is convenient enough to see what Slow movement is and find the roots of the movement briefly. Later to find an answer on how is it possible to survive in a fast forward speed of the world by being ‘Slow’ or even does it make sense to bring up such question in today`s world?

Lurking for seconds in fast society has caused “Time sickness”. Time sickness is the term by which Carl Honoré (2004) -the Canadian journalist- emphasises the fact about running time and

the struggle of human beings to keep pace with it. In today`s world everything is on the speed to grow faster, everything should be done quickly in order to be in the same line with the world today. Such inner sense has created an obsession for a modern human. To maximize the effectiveness and the quality, however, speed is not always a good choice. It is important to know, this does not necessarily mean speed is a bad thing. No! as C.Honore (2004, p:4) asserted:

“Speed has helped to remake our world in ways that are wonderful and liberating. Who wants to live without the Internet or jet travel? The problem is that our love of speed, our obsession with doing more and more in less and less time, has gone too far”

Today, as everyone are aware of the ‘speed of time’ specially in modern societies, there is penchant to accelerate things. In this situation the capitalist system has always solution and cure for everything. Fast food, faster internet, speed-read classes for finishing the novel in shortest possible time, plastic surgery to re-shape the body to save time not to have a healthy diet, sport or walk, ‘*fast thinker*²’ as a cliché from fast food culture, fast art, fast travel; these are only few examples of the so-called ‘cure’ for keeping pace. Accelerating the life and the everyday activities that in their nature there would be no need to speed.

Probably one of the best examples for expressing the fast society is the term ‘McDonaldization’ which is ironically points out the de-humanization of the society. This de-humanization is being processed through the cultures which are common with the characteristics of fast food culture (Ritzer 1993).

Moreover, in all aforementioned examples people totally forget about the act itself, since he/she forgot to slow down.

Here comes a question of what considers fast and what is slow? Which characteristics each carries?

²Pierre Bourdieu

In as much as Fast in different platforms share common characteristics where it is said:

“Fast is busy, controlling, aggressive, hurried, analytical, stressed, superficial, impatient, active, quantity-over-quality”.

Slow Movement equally has some issues in common in different platforms also where it is said:

“calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient, reflective, quality-over-quantity. It is about making real and meaningful connections—with people, culture, work, food, everything.”

C.Honore (2004, p:14)

Interestingly enough, there is a contradiction in the term ‘Slow’. Slow here is the state of mind and does not always mean Slow by its first definition. One can do things quickly and on time but keep ‘slow’ as a frame of mind.

Slow movement is more focused on the experience, the quality, the effectiveness, and in the end to live/survive better in today`s world.

In 1986 Carlo Petrini in Italy as the main leading role of initiating the Slow movement and founder of the Slow food organization in order to demonstrate against fast food franchisee – McDonalds- in Piazza di Spagna. In fact, he wanted to put emphasis on the value and importance of food which well cooked, local materials, and cook and consume at a relaxed speed to give back the meaning to it. As a complementary to this fact, in the answer of the Canadian journalist for the ‘life recipe’ he added :

“If you are always slow, then you are stupid—and that is not at all what we are aiming for...Being Slow means that you control the rhythms of your own life. You decide how fast you have to go in any given context. If today I want to go fast, I go fast; if tomorrow I want to go slow, I go slow. What we are fighting for is the right to determine our own tempos.”(Honore, 2004, p: 16)

As said before, although Slow movement as a state of mind is rooted in food industry, but it is not limited there. Slow cities, slow living, slow design, and slow Travel are some of the

examples of movement inspired by Slowness. All of them would lead to a sustainable future in terms of not only social but also economic and environmental dimension.

2.3.1 Slow Travel, Slow Tourism

The obsession of today`s world for being fast in everything has penetrated in to very many different aspects of a modern person`s life. There is no coincidence that making holiday, travel and tourism is not a shelter for slowing down the pace and a break. This indicates that while making a holiday one who has worked the whole year, wants to receive the relaxation as much as possible in a short time. Thus, this person would be given the method of experiencing the destination. Squeezed holiday tours of only top 10 sights and being very interwoven to the holiday schedules would not only be considered as ‘holiday’ (or break) but instead while going back home there would be felt the need for holiday again.

Such hectic traveling has more or less common characteristics of Mc-donaldization process outlined by Ritzer(1993) including:

- **Efficiency:** in line with the Ritzer 1993 theory about efficiency in Mc-donaldization process which is about the fastest way of getting full while being hungry, one of the fastest ways of doing tasks while travelling is about such efficiency.
- **Calculability:** it is more about the quantity than the quality. Thus, such travel is not about the experience and the quality of experience, but instead it is about to do the tasks fast and pay a packed holiday to consume.
- **Predictability:** when almost everything is standardized and it is totally clear about the plans for the holiday. In this sense then it is no difference where the travelers go to make holiday while following the tedious standards.

Inspired by Slow movement, the emergence of Slow Travel becomes much clear as one of the alternative ways to escape from the hectic tours.

There are different definitions of Slow tourism during these recent years. In long with Dickinson & Lumsdon (2010) for instance Slow Travel is:

“...an emerging conceptual framework which offers an alternative to air and car travel, where people travel to destinations more slowly overland, stay longer and travel less.”

Dickinson (2010) has emerged the options for modes of transportation, followed by the slow food consumption and more interaction with locals to have a deeper understanding of the culture, realizing the atmosphere. This help to maximize the quality experience within the environment.

In addition, slow way of traveling and being as slow tourist (traveler) gives more meaning to the act of travel as well as providing the most pleasurable forms of activities. Indeed, it is kind of resistance against the speed. In line with such notion, Wang (2000) argues that *“...travel not only takes time, but also it makes time”*.

Furthermore, Slow tourism is considered as a form of sustainable tourism. It covers the three dimension of sustainability in context of tourism socially, economically and environmentally.

In harmony with sustainable tourism, Slow tourism carries its own characteristics. Dickinson (2010) listed them as :

1 slow equates to quality time

2 it is about physically slowing down to enjoy what is an offer

3 a quality experience

4 meaning and engagement

5 in tune with ecology and diversity

Referring to ‘*a manifesto for slow travel*’ (2009) it is important to understand that slow tourism is not only summarized to the chosen mode of transportation in order to be ‘slow’. This is due to presence of very high speed trains for instance which although travelling by train has less impact on the environment but act as the same with plane when it comes to experience. (http://www.slowtraveurope.eu/data/downloads/hiddeneurope_25_slowtravel.pdf). Therefore, slow travel is about re-engineering the time and experience. ‘Manifesto for slow travel’ encourage the delighting unexpecteds while travelling.

In this regard, slow travel Europe has a guideline in order to be a slow traveler. However, this does not mean these or the fixed principles that everyone must follow. Instead, these are only some tips or offering which are very flexible and other tips can be added as Slow Travel Europe listed (<http://www.slowtraveurope.eu/slow-travel-europe-some-guiding-principles>) :

- 1. Start at home. The key to slow travel is a state of mind. That can be developed at home.*
- 2. Travel slow. Avoid planes if at all possible, and instead enjoy ferries, local buses and slow trains. Speed destroys the connection with landscape. Slow travel restores it.*
- 3. You may eagerly look forward to the arrival at your chosen destination, but don’t let that anticipation eclipse the pleasure of the journey.*
- 4. Check out local markets and shops.*
- 5. Savour café culture. Sitting in a café, you become part of the cityscape and not merely a passing observer.*
- 6. Take time to get a feel for the languages and dialects of the areas you visit. Learn a few phrases, use a dictionary and buy a local newspaper.*
- 7. Engage with communities at the right level. Choose accommodation and eating options that are appropriate to the area where you are travelling.*
- 8. Do what the locals do, not only what the guidebooks say.*

9. *Savor the unexpected. Delayed trains or missed bus connections create new opportunities.*

10. *Think what you can give back to the communities you visit.*

There are several examples which can be considered as Slow tourism such as ‘Couch surfing’, ‘unseen tours of London’, ‘Bicycle travelling’ are very few examples.

Example: Couch surfing-the birth of a new concept

More detailed information about one of the above example to emphasis on Slow travel would be explained about couch surfing and later in case study bicycle travelling would be discussed in a zoom in detail.

Indeed, Couch surfing is a good example of platforms for slow travel. It has opened a new concept while traveling. It deepens the experience of traveling at destination. It is about direct interaction of people, who might never met before. Founded in 2003 in the US, CouchSurfing provides the notion of hospitality exchange through networking. Like many other social networks, people register to become a member of a whole, joining other members worldwide through which people can share their experience of their own city with the guest who has other frames to visit. Thus the typical experience of a destination can be replaced by a very specific one. A local can show the destination in a very different frame than the traveler expects to do so. In fact, CouchSurfing as a platform can create a meaningful experience so that it is not accessible through a mediated pathway. In addition, it is necessary to mention now a days, couch surfing have broader perspective and ‘couch surfer’ is not only the members of this website, instead the term is dedicated to anyone who would borrow a place to stay in the host destination.

According to CouchSurfing official website, there are different experiences as the outcome of the whole story. One is magnetic experience by which different cultures, new ideas, and unfamiliar ways of being are possible while enjoying to meet new people. It might be needless to say this way of interaction can disinfect the mediated pre judgments and presumption of any given destination.(<http://www.couchsurfing.org/about.html/mission#>)

As we saw earlier in this text, the process of image making in our mind is started and get shaped by media over time. This means the manipulation of meaning of spaces, people, and in total images are in hand of media. This manipulation usually resulted in seeing the world in one way and not the other. It makes us to be afraid of something unknown or inexperience-able. On contrary, other emerging forms of experiencing such as slow travelling affirm that there is no such unknown in the world, we need jus to be daring enough to experience what has told to us as inexperience-able.

3. Methodology

This essay adopts a qualitative method approach consisting of literature review, series of interviews with a slow traveler based on open-ended discussion. This chapter will explain the scientific approach and describe the methods used for collecting and analyzing the data. Moreover, it will discuss the validity and reliability of the research in order to evaluate its quality. In the end the case study, analysis of the case study in order to see how arguments and previous presented theories are visible in experience of our traveler and relevant issues will be presented.

3.1. Research design: a performative study with a qualitative approach

As this study is concerned with exploring people's way of perceptions and every-day thoughts and imagination about particular destinations, a qualitative approach was chosen as a more appropriate method. There are issues of social, cultural and political realm which statistics, hence quantitative methods, cannot measure and understand properly. The main advantage with qualitative research is the ability to study and describe experiences and social phenomena (Silverman, 2006). Since the research question is to understand other possible ways of experiencing a destination and consequence of such approaches to understanding other people and spaces, cultures and environments an exploratory research design was chosen to provide insights and comprehension to this. This approach "...is particularly useful when researchers lack a clear idea of the problems they will meet during the study" (Blumberg et al., 2008: 201).

3.1.1. Series of semi-instructed interviews

Open-ended, flexible or non-structured interviews are generally used in "life history" interviews. The keynote is active listening, allowing the respondent to talk freely and ascribe meanings, while keeping in mind the broader aim of the research (Silverman, 2006). Since I was working with one traveler, I conducted a series of interviews over time. This gave me and him both the

opportunity of understanding each other better and having much more trusty bridge. Moreover since my case was talking about his experiences in past, from 2006 to 2010, giving him a time to think and reflect upon our dialogues was a key point to go more in depth.

In some interviews I used a more standardized technique, yet most of the questions occurred randomly and freely. I included another mutual friend to make the environment more as a discussion panel based on his experiences. This helped me to make a friendly environment where my case did not feel he is in a hardcore scientific case study with dozens of questions that have intentions to achieve particular objectives. I tried both in my performance, terms and words that I used and issues that I engaged in discussion, to make more space for subjectivization of the case instead of studying him as an object. This method is particularly useful when accessing individuals's attitudes and values. Interviews offer a rich source of data, which provides access to how people account for their troubles as well as joy. However, as interviews produce and offer indirect "representations" of an individual's view or opinion, they lack a direct access to events, "facts" and apparent "realities" (Silverman, 2006: 117).

3.1.2. Conducting the analysis: content vs. narrative analysis

In my research I have chosen open content analysis as the way to analyze most of my findings. Through this analysis the researcher gathers the general message of the text and creates a set of subject categories by coding systematically the number of instances when those topics are mentioned within a particular text (Blumberg et al., 2008). Within qualitative research it is important to think that the analysis reports the words or phrases, usually presenting them as quotations under each category. An advantage this measure offers is convenience; through merging large amounts of text into organized sections. However, the major problem is the overlooked sections that gets no attention and hence the conclusions may often seem quite banal or commonplace (Bryman, 2008)

The answers some people provide can be viewed as stories if it relates to their lives or surrounding events, and as such can be conducted through narrative analysis. I used this method since my interviewee provided a narrative account by putting his reflections upon my questions and curiosity into a bigger context and describing it in timely order. Narrative analysis is a used

approach within in-depth and explorative research, since it provides a strong focal point on understanding the narrative as a whole. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to analyze how the respondent evaluates the occurred actions from her perspective (Blumberg et al., 2008).

3.2. An Intro to Case study

A typical definition of case study could be what Yin proposed: *“It is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.”* (Yin,1989)

For a research to have a contextual effect is necessary to avoid the broad understanding of a specific problem. Case study analysis enhances the researcher with such ability. Case study analysis allows the researcher to discover the contextual realities and examine how things are implicated. With this method one can examine the situation, problem or the issue at stake deeper while reaching more practical and core information, in fact by doing a case study one can equip him/her self with precise materials to either promote a theory or criticize and develop one.

Another importance of a case study is its focus on the process rather than on mere outcome, this can be considered as the value added of such method.

As a critic of case studies some pointed out that this method does not have the generalizability. (Johnson, 1994) Using one case study limits the researcher to generalize his/her findings and spread the findings to other situation, this is true only in cases that the research aims to do so, one can use such findings as descriptive information to analysis certain phenomenon, or when such situation is in fact the dominate situation findings from one case study is basically general in itself. Here it is worthy to mention that the classic purpose of case study been understood as discovery and investigation of new hypothesis (Hill, & Turner, 1984, p. 34) , what is missing here is that testing a hypothesis as another benefit of such method. What is crucial in the credibility of a case study is wise selection of the case. A random case may not contain all the aspects of certain issue under investigation therefore one important step for a researcher is to choose his/her case carefully and strategically.

As to my own research the usage of this method allows me to have a descriptive understanding of what I have gone through the different literatures about Media, image and Slowness in context of tourism.

3.3. A Case of Slow Traveler: Stefan Koch and his Bike

This case has been studied through a series of interviews by Skype. Questions were conducted by three main categories:

- 1- General information about him and motivation behind the trips he has done so far.*
- 2- Differences between images from the places he experience, he has in his mind now and images he had in mind before going to the trip.*
- 3- The importance of this way of traveling – slow tourism – in order to experience a world that has never been revealed to us by other means of traveling such as travel packages and advertisements.*

Questions were asked first through a friendly discussion with accompany of another friend to make a chat on the topic instead of asking and answering. The issues were followed by some few questions later through e-mail.

When he was working at a youth hostel instead of doing military service, he got into reading some books, since the place was boring for him. One of these books was “Into Thin Air” a bestseller by Jon Krakauer on one of the deadliest climbing to Everest Mountains in the history.

“I read this book three times during that time, because I was really excited about these tragedies and all these idiotism – I do not know if this is the right word - because you know how much is dangerous this type of mountain climbing.

This was so interesting for me that how crazy people could be. This was one thing.” Stefan says in answer to question of what made you motivate to start traveling by bike and basically on your own desire.

Stefan Koch is around 34 years old, a social worker who lives in Berlin and he has done three main trips by his bike so far. First one was from Cologne to Kathmandu in Nepal which took long 10 months. He started the trip in April 2006 and ended it in January 2007.

His second one was three weeks from Munich to Venice and Alp Mountains and third one was from Karlsruhe to Barcelona.

What made Stefan to start traveling in this way was not only the bestseller book he mentioned, but also other reasons.

One of them was his friends who went to South America by bicycle. He got to the idea of traveling by bike when he met these guys at university, when he was 24.

But what made him so motivated for doing such a trip was thinking of this trip as a way to overcoming the crisis he had in his life. He continues:

“I had a personal crisis in my life. My study was not working so well and I had nervous breakdown. My therapist told me several travel stories about himself and his wife and I realized that it is possible to do such a trip in order to clear the mind, to make a real cut in the daily life.”

Although these three inspirations were appeared in different times but they merged into each other in Stefan’s mind to make him ready for doing such a trip.

Stefan’s travel into Kathmandu from Cologne was planned generally but not in details. He knew the route, the goal and countries he would be passed by. His route was through Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India and finally Nepal.

But how Stefan made things practical was based on information was coming from two main sources: internet and Lonelyplanet.

“In slow tourism internet is always part of it. Because you always looking for information, you always need information such as safety, accommodation, etc. especially when you travel by bike. For example I have found a girl called Sara through a website (hospitalityclub.net.) she helped me a lot for my travel in Iran.”

Sara actually took Stefan to Shiraz, when I met him for the first time when he got to our apartment as a guest. He by this basically was introduced to middle class life style of Iranian society, a life style which is rarely seen in western media.

But how much trust Stefan had on information he got through internet, books and media in his country was another issue that he answered as this:

“I trust this information, but after the trip I realized something else. For instance there is bombing in Pakistan. Then the government says traveler please be very careful in this region. If you never have done such a trip like this before, then you start to be afraid so much and saying: Oh! Bomb! Noooo!

But when you get into this region, you realize that the mentioned region on government alarm is so huge and is not that such a dangerous. So it is about the balance of information. The information was right but the information can grow in wrong way. In this example you might think, oh it is dangerous I should not go! But when you go there, you realize there is nothing to be afraid of.”

“Things are changing.” He adds. That is why you have to check information during the trip especially when you are in longer trips more than one month. One good way is sharing information between travelers. So all these together make a trust on information.”

Stefan believes that you have to get information from all channels but you are the final person who decides on your criteria of doing what and not doing another.

“Some people just need an excuse not to start the trip.” He adds. Media can give those excuses easily.

As a European traveler, traveling in Europe is a bit boring since you get always H&M, MacDonalds and all same shopping malls. We in Europe more or less understand the culture in western Europe but for other countries there is another story.

The image you get from media about other countries – non European countries – is based on political issues. For example I did not know what kind of food or music I can get in Iran, but I was thinking that in Iran’s embassy they juggle with atomic bombs!

You know, such places make me as a European naked, since I do not know what is waiting for me.”

So Stefan believes even the image as European he had from Europeans can be found in trouble by experiencing such travels. It gives you the feeling of fear and trouble he would say.

“But I did not have any idea about these Asian countries before my trip. And I think this a big difference between European and non-European countries in terms of imagination and pre-judgment.” He explains in replying to how different images can affect his trip.

Stefan believes that the image he had from his experience is totally different from what he sees on street and newspaper advertisements.

“You see a billboard, advertising sunshine, beach, kite running, surfing and drinks with happy family in street which could be many places in world, but they do advertise this image for Turkey.”

When you travel with bike you see other spots, villages, people and things that are never shown in advertisements and media. Advertisements like to build an image in your mind to sell the trip to you. So you never experience the trip as on your own, but you experience as they give you.”

Stefan continues his motivation on such traveling by explaining why not all people do such slow travel.

“People want to get relaxation as fast as possible. In a short time they want the highest amount of drink, entertainment and relaxation. They work all the time and they want the trip just to make them relaxed for the hard work they have done not to experience the world. They do not think there are lots of other ways of getting relaxed by experiencing bigger things. People are afraid to lose their jobs if they do such traveling, but the thing is if you have much more experience therefore you can get better jobs too.”

Other possibilities of experiencing a place – somewhere in the world- where you never can hear about it without going to that place by your own way and not the way you have been advised all the time, tell us how much slow tourism can help a better understating of each other. It can make much more convivial society where nobody afraid of the ‘other’(xenophobia). When you experience a place according to the reality that happens there in an actual moment and not according to a frozen image of the place which is paused in the mind of people by watching news, TV series, and movies; you actually make your space for experiencing something that was supposed to be inexperienced. Then you share/make that unseen experience into a communal experience with people from the destination you are visiting. Stefan says in this regard:

“Which tourist would be able to stay on rooftop of an Iranian house in Shiraz with his tent and serves a German Coffee to an Iranian Lady? This could be happening only by doing such travel: Slow and curious to see what you have not seen or imagine before.

3.4. Case study Analysis:

Based on what my informant presented to me, we see a reflective and retrospective insights towards his vision, acts and ways of understanding not only his values and form of life but also other’s forms of living and experiencing. Here I will analysis his words and narratives based on my narrative created after, in form of presentation of him and his traveling acts. For this I will link back his points in terms of experiencing, meaning and image to what already has been discussed in chapter 2 as literature review. Stefan is one regular form of slow traveler who could be a good example of possibility of other forms of doing travel. A travel which is not a mere spending the leisure time but rather a platform for learning, exchanging knowledge and understanding ‘those’ whom we think they are strangers to us. Travel more than consuming leisure based on what forced to us, as a readymade image could be a process that makes alive what William Butler Yeats said once: “*There are no strangers here, Only friends you have not yet met.*”

The case of Stefan as a slow traveler more than anything is an illustrative example that shows not only how contemporary understanding of tourism functions but also is explanatory for showing what the hidden features of slow tourism are.

Tourism and traveling -for whatever reason that they may occur- before anything else challenges the exclusionary function of borders. In the first step the physical and geographical borders are the first to be diminished. After that, cultural, economical, political and even class borders are to be eradicated. A traveler does not merely transport his/her body. He/she moves a juncture of social and cultural concepts as well. Alongside his bike and tent, Stefan had his German coffee as well, through which he experienced a simple – nonetheless memorable; on the rooftop of a house in a tent- companionship. He cleverly -however with a bitter tone- asks; which tourist can have the experience of a rooftop-German coffee in Iran?

This basic and primary function of travel -mixing the borders- is what to be sacrificed first, in the conventional form of tourism. In such form one will travel with a bordered mindset, you travel with a packed, nicely done and perhaps a spectacular image that is protected by what you expect. Therefore, you close the door to experience even before traveling, because you already have a clue what you expect. In other words you travel with already closed borders. You travel in your own territory.

When you travel according to an already prepared image of your destination, when you travel with already knowing what you are going to expect and experience and how you will experience, when the answer to these questions becomes the scale of measurement for the quality of your trip; tourism becomes more and more thin, in a way that the act of tourism hardly fits the term “tourism” and its function. This is the next important issue that can be raised from this case study.

Tourism today is an act which is directed and managed by a complex network, comprised of massive media projection of dazzling and stunning images of a dreamy destination and capital manipulation of personal and private process of experiencing.

Tourism is reduced to a plan for escaping from the hard work at home. An opportunity to enjoy the most with least time spent (it is however interesting to trace the function of capital in this

relation that the best the perfect pleasure is the expensive one and the most exclusionary one). Or as Stefan says “people want to relax as fast as possible”, this can be seen as the core meaning that tourism have today for the vast majority of people.

Such reduction in the meaning of the term “tourism” is part of the violent function of language, a violence which is in line with the contemporary mode of production in capitalistic economies, earning the maximum profits while spending the least amount of time. Such violent function of language have been explained by Zizek : *“Language simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous. It inserts the thing into a field of meaning which is ultimately external to it.”* (Zizek, 2008, p.61)

In other words attribution of one specific meaning to an object or concept through language is seen as a violent act.

In relation to this case Stefan and his method of traveling -from the dominant perspective- is considered weird, unseen rather than tourism, because he is not seen where he supposed to be seen, in a typical historic site, a shopping mall or a ski resort, he has not been seen in places that have been designated for him. Furthermore, he does not even resemble -aesthetically- a “normal” tourist either, he does not hang a digital camera from his neck or protect his skin and eye with sun cream or shades. Stefan as a slow tourist dress like a local member of his destination city he goes where the locals are and he experiences what they experience. In fact he lives up to the name and the main objective of “tourism” but still is not considered one in the eye of a layman. He is not considered in the annual proposal of a tourism department of any government; merely because the term “tourist” and “tourism” no longer are able to encapsulate what they are supposed to.

He truly challenged the borders that are there to domesticate a foreigner to keep him away from the locals or keep the locals away from them, he wisely points out the effect that tourism can have in relation to reduction of xenophobia. If we experience a place, culture or a group of people directly and not through a manipulated filters of media, then understanding the “other” becomes easier. It is essential for any form of affection and bond between two people to be able

to find a common ground, in the case of a tourist it happens through experiencing what the locals are experiencing. As It has been said by Tiqqun “*When, at a certain time and place, two bodies affected by the same form-of-life meet, they experience an objective pact, which precedes any decision. They experience community.*” (Tiqqun, 2010, p.37) this community is not formed on the base of class, power, race, color or gender but on the first hand and pure human experience.

In a nutshell, the experience of Stefan -the slow traveler- highlights three points. Firstly: on the linguistic level the term “tourism” -through its contemporary and conventional form- is no longer capable to contain and transfer its full meaning and objective. Secondly: slow tourism by being faithful to the aims of traveling expands borders and bring closer those who are left apart. Thirdly, slow tourism not only challenges the industry of creating images, spectacle and unreal realities in relation to a certain destination but also take apart the typical image of a tourist. It destroys the idea that tourists belongs to a series of designated areas or a place deserved to be seen is always a beautiful sunset by a calm beach while a happy, beautiful and handsome couple having their drinks in their hands and smiling to each other’s face. In summery destroys the image of happiness and perfect life over the borders.

4. Conclusion

In this short text, I have tried to touch one aspect of massive tourism industry which usually considered as an important factor in marketing: 'the image'. Unlike tourism practitioners who usually reproduce 'the image' in order to sell more, I tried to see how other travelers who do not want to consume what has been offered to them, challenge 'the image'.

As we discussed media – TV, internet and newspaper among many – is the main source for creating and reproducing images. But we should not ignore the role of media in challenging the image as well. For instance the way social media has changed our perception about 'the other' in recent years. But here, the point is that the dominant form of rhetoric media based on message delivering and imposing 'the truth' by news strategies even in movies and ads and not only by news programs, dramatically affect the way we experience the world. This experiencing the world, which traditionally used to be expanded by the act of traveling, ironically turned to an act of passive watching. If in early modern era, people – usually wealthy ones- were able to discover and visit lands beyond their homelands and experience the world as a place much bigger than their farms, today everybody, from any social and economical class experience the world but in a single, rhetoric and forced way of watching TV/Internet. Yes, tourism becomes for everybody thanks to mass industrialization of late modern era and not only for rich classes, but the active, participating and engaging traveling into real lands with real people has not been achieved by such massification of tourism. We need other ways of traveling in order to experience the world as other people in other parts of the globe have lived. Tourism industry is not able to open that space and that is why movements such as slow tourism or concepts such as couch surfing are coming out of non-corporate, non-organizational and non-institutional sources, where collectives create a 'common wealth' because of this simple fact that we people share the earth as a common space/time for experiencing and understanding each other.

However, these approaches and concepts of doing travel could be occupied by commercial sectors easily as it has been done quite broadly in eco- awareness which resulted in critique such as 'green washing'. Such concepts are the best voids for commercial sectors to fill in and get abused as competitive factors with other competitors. One can say, these alternatives are working proper until they are not caught in trap of commercialism.

The example of Stefan could be different in terms of different gender, social class and background. Of course one man with a background in social working, could be daring enough to face 'dangers' of such trips that we always afraid of. Now the question is, how 'ordinary' people – if we can use such term - , those who watch TV a lot, inspired by movies so much and see the world as is advertised can be inspired by other forms of travelling than what is the only way of doing so? How a middle class family would be interested to do a slow travel? How a couple is into choosing a slow travel by bike for their honeymoon?

My only answer would be that we need to discuss and show there are several ways than the way Stefan did his journey, just to affirm to ourselves that there are possibilities that have not been seen yet. Just because of this simple fact that these alternatives are not practical or suitable for everybody, we cannot skip or ignore them. we need to face them, challenge and discuss them, bring them up in to public more and more, in theoretical and practical levels in order to open a space for experience beyond the borders, cultures, lands and 'otherness'.

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6.Appendix1.



The situation room, 1st of May 2011- source:www.bbc.co.uk