John Urry

The Tourist Gaze

Second edition

G
155
.A1
U77
2002

Theory, Culture & Society

Theory, Culture & Society caters for the resurgence of interest in culture within contemporary social science and the humanities. Building on the heritage of classical social theory, the book series examines ways in which this tradition has been reshaped by a new generation of theorists. It also publishes theoretically informed analyses of everyday life, popular culture, and new intellectual movements.

EDITOR: Mike Featherstone, *Nottingham Trent University*

SERIES EDITORIAL BOARD
Roy Boyne, *University of Durham*
Mike Hepworth, *University of Aberdeen*
Scott Lash, *Goldsmiths College, University of London*
Roland Robertson, *University of Aberdeen*
Bryan S. Turner, *University of Cambridge*

THE TCS CENTRE
The *Theory, Culture & Society* book series, the journals *Theory, Culture & Society* and *Body & Society*, and related conference, seminar and postgraduate programmes operate from the TCS Centre at Nottingham Trent University. For further details of the TCS Centre's activities please contact:

Centre Administrator
The TCS Centre, Room 175
Faculty of Humanities
Nottingham Trent University
Clifton Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8NS, UK
e-mail: tcs@ntu.ac.uk
web: http://tcs.ntu.ac.uk

Recent volumes include:

The Experience of Culture
Michael Richardson

Individualization
Ulrich Beck and E. Beck-Gernsheim

Virilio Live
John Armitage

The Sociological Ambition
Chris Shilling and Philip Mellor

Embodying the Monster
Margrit Shildrick

Critique of Information
Scott Lash

The Tourist Gaze

Second Edition

John Urry

İSTANBUL BİLGİ
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

SAGE Publications
London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi

© 2002 John Urry

First published 1990

Reprinted 1991 (twice), 1992,1993,1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000. Reprinted 2002, 2003

Second edition 2002

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission in writing from the Publishers.

SAGE Publications Ltd
6 Bonhill Street
London EC2A 4PU

SAGE Publications Inc
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
32, M-Block Market
Greater Kailash - I
New Delhi 110 048

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is
available from the British Library

ISBN 0 7619 7346 X
ISBN 0 7619 7347 8

Library of Congress control number available

Typeset by SIVA Math Setters, Chennai, India
Printed in Great Britain by The Cromwell Press Ltd,
Trowbridge, Wiltshire

'To remain stationary in these times of change, when all the world is on the move, would be a crime. Hurrah for the Trip – the cheap, cheap Trip' (Thomas Cook in 1854, quoted Brendon, 1991: 65).

'A view? Oh a view! How delightful a view is!' (Miss Bartlett, in *A Room with a View*; Forster, 1955: 8, orig. 1908).

'T[t]he camera and tourism are two of the uniquely modern ways of defining reality' (Horne, 1984: 21).

At least for richer households of the 'west': 'home is no longer one place. It is locations' (bell hooks, 1991: 148).

'For the twentieth-century tourist, the world has become one large department store of countrysides and cities' (Schivelbusch, 1986: 197).

'It's funny, isn't it, how every traveller is a tourist except one's self' (an Edwardian skit, quoted Brendon, 1991: 188)

'Since Thomas Cook's first excursion train it is as if a magician's wand had been passed over the face of the globe' (*The Excursionist*, June 1897, quoted in Ring, 2000: 83).

The tourist 'pay[s] for their freedom; the right to disregard native concerns and feelings, the right to spin their own web of meanings ... The world is the tourist's oyster ... to be lived pleasurably – and thus given meaning' (Bauman, 1993: 241).

'Going by railroad, I do not consider travelling at all; it is merely being 'sent' to a place, and no different from being a parcel' (John Ruskin, quoted in Wang, 2000: 179).

'The thesis of my book is that sightseeing is a substitute for religious ritual. The sightseeing tour as secular pilgrimage. Accumulation of grace by visiting the shrines of high culture' (Rupert Sheldrake, in *Paradise News*: David Lodge 1991: 75).

'Wow, that's so postcard' (visitor seeing Victoria Falls, quoted Osborne, 2000: 79).

Contents

Preface ix

Preface to the second edition xi

1 The Tourist Gaze 1

2 Mass Tourism and the Rise and Fall of the Seaside Resort 16

3 The Changing Economics of the Tourist Industry 38

4 Working Under the Tourist Gaze 59

5 Cultural Changes and the Restructuring of Tourism 74

6 Gazing on History 94

7 Seeing and Theming 124

8 Globalising the Gaze 141

Bibliography 162

Index 175

Preface

I am very grateful for the advice, encouragement and assistance of the following, especially those who have provided me with tourist gems from around the world: Paul Bagguley, Nick Buck, Peter Dickens, Paul Heelas, Mark Hilton, Scott Lash, Michelle Lowe, Celia Lury, Jane Mark-Lawson, David Morgan, Ian Rickson, Chris Rojek, Mary Rose, Peter Saunders, Dan Shapiro, Rob Shields, Hermann Schwengel, John Towner, Sylvia Walby, John Walton and Alan Warde. I am also grateful to professionals working in the tourism and hospitality industry who responded to my queries with much information and advice. Some interviews reported here were conducted under the auspices of the ESRC Initiative on the Changing Urban and Regional System. I am grateful to that Initiative in first prompting me to take holiday-making 'seriously'.

John Urry
Lancaster, December 1989

Preface to the Second Edition

This new edition has maintained the structure of the first edition except for the addition of a new chapter (8) on 'Globalising the Gaze'. The other seven chapters have been significantly updated in terms of data, the incorporation of relevant new studies and some better illustrations. I am very grateful for the extensive research assistance and informed expertise that has been provided by Viv Cuthill for this new edition. I am also grateful to Mike Featherstone for originally prompting a book on tourism, and Chris Rojek who suggested this second edition as well as for collaboration on our co-edited *Touring Cultures*.

Over the past decade I have supervised various PhDs at Lancaster on issues of tourism, travel and mobility. I have learnt much from these doctorates and especially from the conversations about the ongoing work. I would especially like to thank the following, some of whom commented very helpfully on Chapter 8: Alexandra Arellano, Javier Caletrio, Viv Cuthill, Saolo Cwerner, Monica Degen, Tim Edensor, Hernan Gutiérrez Sagastume, Juliet Jain, Jonas Larsen, Neil Lewis, Chia-ling Lai, Richard Sharpley, Jo Stanley and Joyce Yeh. I have also benefited from many discussions with the MA students who have taken my 'Tourist Gaze' module over the past decade.

Lancaster colleagues with whom I have discussed these topics (some also making very helpful comments on Chapter 8) include Sara Ahmed, Gordon Clark, Carol Crawshaw, Bülent Diken, Anne-Marie Fortier, Robin Grove-White, Kevin Hetherington, Vincent Kaufmann, Phil Macnaghten, Colin Pooley, Katrin Schneeberger and Mimi Sheller.

Working on graduate matters in the Sociology Department with Pennie Drinkall and Claire O'Donnell has been a pleasure over the past few years.

John Urry
Lancaster, April 2001

1

The Tourist Gaze

Why Tourism is Important

> The clinic was probably the first attempt to order a science on the exercise and decisions of the gaze ... the medical gaze was also organized in a new way. First, it was no longer the gaze of any observer, but that of a doctor supported and justified by an institution ... Moreover, it was a gaze that was not bound by the narrow grid of structure ... but that could and should grasp colours, variations, tiny anomalies ... (Foucault, 1976: 89)

The subject of this book would appear to have nothing whatsoever to do with the serious world of medicine and the medical gaze that concerns Foucault. This is a book about pleasure, about holidays, tourism and travel, about how and why for short periods people leave their normal place of work and residence. It is about consuming goods and services which are in some sense unnecessary. They are consumed because they supposedly generate pleasurable experiences which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life. And yet at least a part of that experience is to gaze upon or view a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscapes which are out of the ordinary. When we 'go away' we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so. In other words, we gaze at what we encounter. And this gaze is as socially organised and systematised as is the gaze of the medic. Of course it is of a different order in that it is not confined to professionals 'supported and justified by an institution'. And yet even in the production of 'unnecessary' pleasure there are in fact many professional experts who help to construct and develop our gaze as tourists.

This book then is about how in different societies and especially within different social groups in diverse historical periods the tourist gaze has changed and developed. I shall elaborate on the processes by which the gaze is constructed and reinforced, and will consider who or what authorises it, what its consequences are for the 'places' which are its object, and how it interrelates with a variety of other social practices.

There is no single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group and by historical period. Such gazes are constructed through difference. By this I mean not merely that there is no universal experience that is true for all tourists at all times. Rather the gaze in any historical period is constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness. What makes a particular tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted with; what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be. The gaze therefore presupposes a system of social activities and signs which

locate the particular tourist practices, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practices, particularly those based within the home and paid work.

Tourism, holiday-making and travel are more significant social phenomena than most commentators have considered. On the face of it there could not be a more trivial subject for a book. And indeed since social scientists have had plenty of difficulty explaining weightier topics, such as work or politics, it might be thought that they would have great difficulties in accounting for more trivial phenomena such as holiday-making. However, there are interesting parallels with the study of deviance. This involves the investigation of bizarre and idiosyncratic social practices which happen to be defined as deviant in some societies but not necessarily in others. The assumption is that the investigation of deviance can reveal interesting and significant aspects of 'normal' societies. Just why various activities are treated as deviant can illuminate how different societies operate much more generally.

This book is based on the notion that a similar analysis can be applied to tourism. Such practices involve the notion of 'departure', of a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and the mundane. By considering the typical objects of the tourist gaze one can use these to make sense of elements of the wider society with which they are contrasted. In other words, to consider how social groups construct their tourist gaze is a good way of getting at just what is happening in the 'normal society'. We can use the fact of difference to interrogate the normal through investigating the typical forms of tourism. Thus rather than being a trivial subject tourism is significant in its ability to reveal aspects of normal practices which might otherwise remain opaque. Opening up the workings of the social world often requires the use of counter-intuitive and surprising methodologies; as in this case the investigation of the 'departures' involved in the tourist gaze.

Although I have insisted on the historical and sociological variation in this gaze there are some minimal characteristics of the social practices which are conveniently described as 'tourism'. I now set these out to provide a baseline for more historical, sociological, and global analyses that I develop later.

1 Tourism is a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organised work. It is one manifestation of how work and leisure are organised as separate and regulated spheres of social practice in 'modern' societies. Indeed acting as a tourist is one of the defining characteristics of being 'modern' and is bound up with major transformations in paid work. This has come to be organised within particular places and to occur for regularised periods of time.
2 Tourist relationships arise from a movement of people to, and their stay in, various destinations. This necessarily involves some movement through space, that is the journeys, and periods of stay in a new place or places.

3 The journey and stay are to, and in, sites outside the normal places of residence and work. Periods of residence elsewhere are of a short-term and temporary nature. There is a clear intention to return 'home' within a relatively short period of time.
4 The places gazed upon are for purposes not directly connected with paid work and they normally offer some distinctive contrasts with work (both paid and unpaid).
5 A substantial proportion of the population of modern societies engages in such tourist practices; new socialised forms of provision are developed in order to cope with the mass character of the gaze of tourists (as opposed to the individual character of 'travel').
6 Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze.
7 The tourist gaze is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary. The viewing of such tourist sights often involves different forms of social patterning, with a much greater sensitivity to visual elements of landscape or townscape than normally found in everyday life. People linger over such a gaze which is then normally visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards, films, models and so on. These enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured.
8 The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs. When tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is 'timeless romantic Paris'. When a small village in England is seen, what they gaze upon is the 'real olde England'. As Culler argues: 'the tourist is interested in everything as a sign of itself ... All over the world the unsung armies of semioticians, the tourists, are fanning out in search of the signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behaviour, exemplary Oriental scenes, typical American thruways, traditional English pubs' (1981: 127).
9 An array of tourist professionals develop who attempt to reproduce ever new objects of the tourist gaze. These objects are located in a complex and changing hierarchy. This depends upon the interplay between, on the one hand, competition between interests involved in the provision of such objects and, on the other hand, changing class, gender, generational distinctions of taste within the potential population of visitors.

In this book I consider the development of, and historical transformations in, the tourist gaze. I mainly chart such changes in the past couple of centuries; that is, in the period in which mass tourism has become widespread within much of Europe, north America and increasingly within most other parts of

the world. To be a tourist is one of the characteristics of the 'modern' experience. Not to 'go away' is like not possessing a car or a nice house. It has become a marker of status in modern societies and is also thought to be necessary for good health (see Feifer, 1985: 224).

This is not to suggest that there was no organised travel in premodern societies, but it was very much the preserve of elites (see Towner, 1988). In Imperial Rome, for example, a fairly extensive pattern of travel for pleasure and culture existed for the elite. A travel infrastructure developed, partly permitted by two centuries of peace. It was possible to travel from Hadrian's Wall to the Euphrates without crossing a hostile border (Feifer, 1985: ch. 1). Seneca maintained that this permitted city-dwellers to seek ever new sensations and pleasures. He said: 'men [sic] travel widely to different sorts of places seeking different distractions because they are fickle, tired of soft living, and always seek after something which eludes them' (quoted in Feifer, 1985: 9).

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries pilgrimages had become a widespread phenomenon 'practicable and systematized, served by a growing industry of networks of charitable hospices and mass-produced indulgence handbooks' (Feifer, 1985: 29; Eade and Sallnow, 1991). Such pilgrimages often included a mixture of religious devotion and culture and pleasure. By the fifteenth century there were regular organised tours from Venice to the Holy Land.

The Grand Tour had become firmly established by the end of the seventeenth century for the sons of the aristocracy and the gentry, and by the late eighteenth century for the sons of the professional middle class. Over this period, between 1600 and 1800, treatises on travel shifted from a scholastic emphasis on touring as an opportunity for discourse, to travel as eyewitness observation. There was a visualisation of the travel experience, or the development of the 'gaze', aided and assisted by the growth of guidebooks which promoted new ways of seeing (see Adler, 1989). The character of the tour itself shifted, from the earlier 'classical Grand Tour' based on the emotionally neutral observation and recording of galleries, museums and high cultural artefacts, to the nineteenth-century 'romantic Grand Tour' which saw the emergence of 'scenic tourism' and a much more private and passionate experience of beauty and the sublime (see Towner, 1985). It is also interesting to note how travel was expected to play a key role in the cognitive and perceptual education of the English upper class (see Dent, 1975).

The eighteenth century had also seen the development of a considerable tourist infrastructure in the form of spa towns throughout much of Europe (Thompson, 1981: 11–12). Myerscough notes that the 'whole apparatus of spa life with its balls, its promenades, libraries, masters of ceremonies was designed to provide a concentrated urban experience of frenetic socialising for a dispersed rural elite' (1974: 5). There have always been periods in which the mass of the population has engaged in play or recreation. In the countryside work and play were particularly intertwined in the case of fairs. Most towns and villages in England had at least one fair a year and many had

more. People would often travel considerable distances and the fairs always involved a mixture of business and pleasure normally centred around the tavern. By the eighteenth century the public house had become a major centre for public life in the community, providing light, heat, cooking facilities, furniture, news, banking and travel facilities, entertainment, and sociability (see Harrison, 1971; Clark, 1983).

But before the nineteenth century few people outside the upper classes travelled anywhere to see objects for reasons that were unconnected with work or business. And it is this which is the central characteristic of mass tourism in modern societies, namely that much of the population in most years will travel somewhere else to gaze upon it and stay there for reasons basically unconnected with work. Travel is thought to occupy 40 per cent of available 'free time' in Britain (Williams and Shaw, 1988b: 12). If people do not travel, they lose status: travel is the marker of status. It is a crucial element of modern life to feel that travel and holidays are necessary. 'I need a holiday' is the surest reflection of a modern discourse based on the idea that people's physical and mental health will be restored if only they can 'get away' from time to time.

The importance of this can be seen in the sheer scale of contemporary travel. There are 698 million international passenger arrivals each year, compared with 25 million in 1950 – with the total predicted to be one billion by 2010 and 1.6 billion by 2020. There was a 7.4 per cent increase in travel in the year 2000 alone (WTO, 2000a). At any one time there are 300,000 passengers in flight *above* the US, equivalent to a substantial city. There are two million air passengers each day in the USA (Gottdiener, 2001: 1). Half a million new hotel rooms are built annually, while there are 31 million refugees across the globe (Kaplan, 1996: 101; Makimoto and Manners, 1997: ch. 1; Papastergiadis, 2000: ch. 2). World-wide tourism is growing at 4–5 per cent per annum. 'Travel and tourism' is the largest industry in the world, accounting for 11.7 per cent of world GDP, 8 per cent of world exports and 8 per cent of all employment (WTTC, 2000: 8; Tourism Concern website).

This occurs almost everywhere, with the World Tourism Organisation publishing tourism/travel statistics for over 180 countries with at least 70 countries now receiving more than one million international tourist arrivals a year (WTO, 2000a; 2000b). There is more or less no country in the world that is not a significant receiver of visitors. However, the flows of such visitors originate very unequally, with the 45 countries that have 'high' human development accounting for three-quarters of international tourism departures (UNDP, 1999: 53–5). Such mobilities are enormously costly for the environment with transport accounting for around one-third of all CO_2 emissions (see the many accounts in *Tourism in Focus*). There is an astonishing tripling of world car travel predicted between 1990–2050 (Hawkin, Lovins, 1999).

Within the UK tourist-related services now employ about 1.8 million people; such employment having risen by 40 per cent since 1980 while overall employment has increased only marginally (Dept of Culture, Media and

Sport website). Tourist spending by overseas visitors to the UK is currently worth at least £13 billion (Dept of Culture, Media and Sport website). These figures reflect the many new tourist sites that have opened over the past two or three decades. There were 800 visitor attractions in 1960, 2,300 in 1983 and 6,100 by 2000 (Cabinet Office, 1983; Dept of Culture, Media and Sport website; Hanna, 2000). In 1987, 233 million visits were made to such attractions; by 1998 this had risen to 395 million (The *Guardian*, 12 December 1988; Dept of Culture, Media and Sport website). Apart from the Millennium Dome (with 6.5 million visitors in 2000), the most popular sites in Britain are Blackpool Pleasure Beach (7.2 million visitors), Tate Modern (5 million visitors), Alton Towers (2.7 million visitors), Madame Tussauds (2.6 million visitors), and the Tower of London (2.4 million visitors) (English Tourism Council, 2000/2001). However, the proliferation of new sites has meant that many struggle to attract sufficient paying visitors and there have been some closures of recently opened attractions (Hanna, 2000: A79–88).

There have been significant increases in personal travel. Between the 1970s and the late 1990s there was a 50 per cent increase in total passenger mileage within Britain; 6,728 miles are travelled each year (www.transtat.detr.gov.uk). Even by 1985, 70 per cent of people lived in households that possessed a car, while now one-quarter of households possess two cars.

Car ownership has permitted some increase in the number of domestic holidays taken in Britain, which rose from 126 million in 1985 to 146 million in 1999, although these mainly consisted of short and medium length holidays (Key Note Report, 1987: 15; English Tourism Council, 2000/2001). There has been a very significant increase in visits to see friends and relatives; this grew faster in the 1990s than any other form of domestic tourism, especially amongst young people. Business travel accounts for about one-eighth of all travel (English Tourism Council, 2000: F7–14).

At the same time there has been a marked rise in the number of holidays taken abroad. In 1976 about 11.5 million visits were made abroad by UK residents. By 1986 28 per cent of Britons went abroad, making about 25 million journeys, of which about a quarter were to Spain (Mitchinson, 1988: 48; Business Monitor Quarterly Statistics, MQ6 Overseas Travel and Tourism). And by 1998, UK citizens made 51 million visits abroad (BTA 2000: 52–3).

There has been an increase in the number of tourists coming to the UK. There were 11 million visits in 1976, 15.5 million in 1987, and 25 million in 1999 (Landry et al., 1989: 45; British Tourist Authority web site). The UK is the sixth most frequented tourist destination, following France, US, Spain, Italy and China, but only a little ahead of the Russian Federation, Canada and Mexico (World Tourism Organization website; the UK is fifth highest in terms of receipts).

Finally, spending by such visitors accounts for five per cent of the wider leisure market, much of it going on retailing expenditure (Martin and Mason, 1987: 95–6). Domestic tourists spend a lower proportion on shopping but even here the proportion is rising. Martin and Mason conclude: 'shopping is becoming more significant to tourism, both as an area of spending and as an

incentive for travelling' (1987: 96). In 1998/9 household expenditure on transport had reached 17 percent of total expenditure, rising from around 14 per cent ten years earlier (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions/Transport Statistics website).

In the next section I briefly consider some of the main theoretical contributions that have attempted to make sociological sense of these extensive flows of people.

Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Tourism

Making theoretical sense of 'fun, pleasure and entertainment' has proved a difficult task for social scientists. In this section I shall summarise some of the main contributions to the sociology of tourism. They are not uninteresting but they leave much work still to be done. In the rest of the book I develop some notions relevant to the theoretical understanding of tourist activity, drawing on contributions discussed here but also connecting developments to debates on emergent 'globalization'.

One of the earliest formulations is Boorstin's analysis of the 'pseudo-event' (1964; and see Cohen, 1988). He argues, partly anticipating Baudrillard, that contemporary Americans cannot experience 'reality' directly but thrive on 'pseudo-events'. Tourism is the prime example of these (see Eco, 1986; Baudrillard, 1988). Isolated from the host environment and the local people, the mass tourist travels in guided groups and finds pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions, gullibly enjoying 'pseudo-events' and disregarding the 'real' world outside. As a result tourist entrepreneurs and the indigenous populations are induced to produce ever more extravagant displays for the gullible observer who is thereby further removed from the local people. Over time, via advertising and the media, the images generated of different tourist gazes come to constitute a closed self-perpetuating system of illusions which provide the tourist with the basis for selecting and evaluating potential places to visit. Such visits are made, says Boorstin, within the 'environmental bubble' of the familiar American-style hotel which insulates the tourist from the strangeness of the host environment.

A number of later writers develop and refine this relatively simple thesis of a historical shift from the 'individual traveller' to the 'mass society tourist'. Particularly noteworthy is Turner and Ash's *The Golden Hordes* (1975), which fleshes out the thesis about how the tourist is placed at the centre of a strictly circumscribed world. Surrogate parents (travel agents, couriers, hotel managers) relieve the tourist of responsibility and protect him/her from harsh reality. Their solicitude restricts the tourist to the beach and certain approved objects of the tourist gaze (see Edensor 1998, on package holiday makers at the Taj Mahal). In a sense, Turner and Ash suggest, the tourists' sensuality and aesthetic sense are as restricted as they are in their home country. This is further heightened by the relatively superficial way in which indigenous cultures necessarily have to be presented to the tourist. They note about Bali that: 'Many aspects of Balinese culture and art are so