

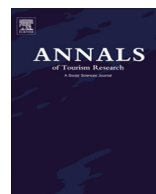


ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures)



# Flights of fantasy: A reformulation of the flyers' dilemma



Martin Young <sup>\*,a</sup>, Francis Markham <sup>b</sup>, Arianne C. Reis <sup>a</sup>, James E.S. Higham <sup>c,d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Southern Cross University, Australia

<sup>b</sup> The Australian National University, Australia

<sup>c</sup> University of Otago, New Zealand

<sup>d</sup> University of Stavanger, Norway

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 29 September 2014

Revised 15 May 2015

Accepted 19 May 2015

Available online 6 June 2015

**Coordinating Editor: Susanne Becken**

#### Keywords:

Frequent flying

Risk society

Consumer capitalism

Ideology

Culture industries

Climate change

### ABSTRACT

We position pleasure travel within Beck's risk society as a contradictory form of consumption that simultaneously produces individual pleasure and global environmental risk. We examine the paradoxical emergence of the 'anxious traveler' from this contradiction, arguing that this social category is necessary to individualize and apportion the global, environmental risk associated with frequent flying, and hence legitimate the reproduction of unsustainable travel practices. We identify several future scenarios that may synthesize this frequent-flying dialectic. On reflection, these scenarios themselves appear as cultural productions, suggesting that our attempts to imagine the future are crippled by the hegemonic ahistoricism associated with contemporary capitalism.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

*My wing is ready for flight,*

*I would like to turn back.*

*If I stayed timeless time,*

*I would have little luck.*

Gerhard Scholem, "Grus vom Angelus"

From Benjamin (1968, p. 257)

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [martin.young@scu.edu.au](mailto:martin.young@scu.edu.au) (M. Young), [francis.markham@anu.edu.au](mailto:francis.markham@anu.edu.au) (F. Markham), [arianne.reis@scu.edu.au](mailto:arianne.reis@scu.edu.au) (A.C. Reis), [james.higham@otago.ac.nz](mailto:james.higham@otago.ac.nz) (J.E.S. Higham).

## Introduction

Contemporary air travel is heavily implicated in everyday consumption practices. Globally, over 3.0 billion air passenger trips were made in 2013, up from 1.1 billion in 1993, and 0.4 billion in 1973 (World Bank, 2014). This increasing aero-mobility has well-documented environmental costs (Lee et al., 2009). These costs need to be somehow justified, or rationalised, in order for the airline industry to reproduce itself. One discursive resolution to the problem posed by the growing environmental impacts of aero-mobility is to interpret these as the consequences of individual consumer choices, rather than of the structural conditions of production. This individualization of environmental harm opens the door to the interpretation of flying as a form of excessive pleasure consumption, one that locates the environmental problems associated with air-travel in the excessive appetites of individual consumers or, in this case, 'binge flyers' (Cohen, Higham, & Cavaliere, 2011; Randles & Mander, 2009). Casting aero-mobility as 'binge flying', a psychologically disordered version of otherwise rational air travel, invites the sort of behavioral-pathological analysis routinely applied to other forms of pleasure consumption (e.g. alcohol and tobacco).

This approach is problematic in the context of pleasure travel. Indeed, the 'addicted flyer' construct has been criticized in terms of its classification validity, allocation of negative consequences, transfer of responsibility, and tendency towards social control and domination (Young, Higham, & Reis, 2014). The construct of the addicted flyer not only represents an analytical cul-de-sac, but also serves to perpetuate the very system it intends to critique. By individualizing responsibility for environmental damage, the 'flyers-dilemma' becomes a discursive device through which an unsustainable industry can increase production without shouldering material responsibility. In this sense, the flying-addict scapegoat becomes a necessary precondition for the reproduction of aero-mobility specifically, and the tourism industries more generally.

The fundamental question we now face is how to analyze the phenomenon of flying consumption without resorting to the categorizations of addiction psychology (Young et al., 2014). This necessitates an analysis of the structural conditions of flying production, conditions which produce the flying-addict as an ideological device of legitimation. Attempting a structural analysis may go some way towards both resisting the discursive reproduction of the 'flying addict', and to re-imagining possible futures for aero-mobility. As the basis for our analysis we develop a dialectical chain, loosely based on the triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. We examine the key logic driving a particular configuration of air travel (thesis), examine the contradiction contained within this formulation (antithesis), then go on to tease out the ways these contradictions have been temporarily resolved (synthesis). We write 'temporarily resolved' as we are attempting to reveal an inherently historical, and hence contingent, process (Benjamin, 1968). In what follows we identify three general moments of dialectic transition in the way environmental risk associated with flying is constructed and apportioned through the ideological edifice of consumer capitalism. We constitute the dialectic through the juxtaposition of two terms: 'undifferentiated—differentiated' and 'global—local'. The latter is a simple expression of geographic scale. The former refers to the individualized, varied social patterning of phenomena, one commonly associated with consumption practices, rather than the 'de-differentiation' employed by some tourism scholars to describe the blurring of categories between travel/tourism and everyday life (e.g. Uriely, 2005). To be clear, we present a structural, dialectical analysis that is entirely modernist in mode (e.g. Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991), not a poststructuralist attempt to deconstruct modernist categories commonly associated with late capitalism.

## The risk society

### *Beck's risk society thesis*

We commence our dialectical analysis by locating frequent-flying within the broader sociological framework of the risk society (Beck, 1992, 1995). Beck argues that one of the characteristics of modernity (i.e. industrialized society) is the desire to control, and respond to, the increasingly global and inter-generational risks produced by the very process of modernization itself (e.g. global warming,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1006967>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1006967>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)