



SEEKING FOR UTOPIA OR UTOPIAN TRAVEL

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ABSTRACT

We believe that travel, which is perhaps the most important element of tourism, should be questioned with the concept of utopia further. Associating the concept of utopia with travel will close a gap or lead to a new discussion. Therefore, we evaluated the relationship between travel and utopia in this paper. Following the philosophical basis of the concept of utopia, we have determined its equivalent in tourism literature as the transformation of utopian thought into travel. In this context, we held discussions within the scope of travelers who prefer more independent and longer travel than tourists. We realized that the aims of travelers who set out to their own utopian spaces, transform being on the road rather than arriving a destination. Focusing on these utopian travels, we embrace the hermeneutic paradigm in the paper. Hence, we propose a model by examining travels with utopian ideas through sociological and psychological discussions. The prominent concepts in this model were the social life-utopia and the escape-approach. Eventually, we mentioned related discussions and gave suggestions for future studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism movements are handled in the context of a change of place and the perception of each place differs. For instance, let us consider the Eiffel Tower, which has become the symbol of France. Let us think about someone who is visiting Paris for a short vacation and someone else who is working in a tourism business around Champs-Élysées. Anyone who is on a Paris vacation likely has a romantic gaze, while the tourism worker sees an ordinary iron pile. Adding to the same example residents of Paris who already live there, their point of view would be quite different. There is also a difference between the gaze of a tourist visiting Paris and a traveler. Perhaps many travelers do not even visit Eifel Tower.

While tourists travel to destinations they perceive as more familiar and safer destinations in Europe and North America, travelers prefer riskier but also exotic and authentic destinations in Africa and Asia. Therefore, each of the touristic destinations is considered from different perspectives. There are differences between what tourists and travelers see in a destination and what the locals see, as well as the perspectives of old and new residents of the destination. Even though individuals share the same place, they live in different worlds. Therefore, there is no single community or place (Adam, 2011; Bell, 1996; Harvey, 2020; Lefebvre, 2012; Urry, 2002).

The difference between tourists and travelers is

critical since this study is directly concerned with travelers. Therefore, it is necessary to explain what is meant by travelers. While a tourist travels on compressed programs to take advantage of their short-term holidays, a traveler aims to be on the road by creating more time. While the tourists aim to reach their destination, travelers are on the road but never get anywhere. Tourists know where they are going, travelers are the one who does not go where they know. Tourists and travelers vary not only in their behavioral patterns but also in the underlying motivations impelling them to travel (Wood & House, 1991; Zurick, 1995; Honey, 1998). Hence the fact that travelers differ from tourists in many ways means that they can be seen as a different community.

Travelers visit destinations to interact with locals and other travelers to embrace travel thoughts. In addition, during their travel, travelers choose destinations where some rules and restrictions related to routine life are relaxed since they prefer spaces with different behavioral norms. Onfray (2017) states that in his *Filosofia del viaggio: Poetica della geografia*:

“Travelers are no longer in the abandoned place during the journey, but they have not yet reached the

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destination they desire. At this stage, travelers are in a state of gravity, spatial, temporal, cultural, and social. As the distance from the place of residence gradually increases, travelers whose distance to the destination are decreasing wanders in this no man's land. The world between these two points obeys the laws unaware of laws governing conventional human relations."

Changes in time and place bring results not only in terms of distance, but also in a sense of resistance, opposition, pleasure, autonomy, and freedom. Although travelers do not create consciously structured communities, they consist of individuals who have a critical perspective on social life. The lifestyle they embrace is to stand against the imposed reality. They share an ideology, practice, and a sense of belonging to a community. Hence, they are a subculture since they are primarily concerned with movement. That is, they try to change their lives, to adapt to their essence. They are also a part of modern utopian thought, which is a criticism of social rituals (Macbeth, 2000).

Travelers who dream of an ideal society or ideal living spaces tend to experience distinguishing social life. Therefore, they strive to live in their ideal spaces and societies, even for a short-term. The desire of travelers to visit these spaces as an escape can be considered the practice of the first utopian writings. Undoubtedly, visiting these spaces cannot be explained solely in terms of utopia. However, even though the development of tourism is explained by many factors, the concept of utopia can be seen inadequately in these studies. In this context, this study aims to relate utopian thought with travel. To do this, it is necessary to summarize the utopian thoughts of travelers and to interpret utopia. Furthermore, it may be valuable to bring utopian thought to the field of tourism by associating it with the travelers' experiences. Therefore, the aim is to address utopian travel to explain the complex structure of travel culture with a model proposal.

2. TRAVELER MOTIVATIONS: BEYOND UTOPIA

There is a wide range of literature reviews that discuss, directly or indirectly, travel motivation. However, according to MacCannell (1976) there is an underlying utopian ideal of these motivations. While in the past, work and religion were the basis for identity and a sense of life, nowadays leisure activities have become more valuable. Travelers seek for freedom and meaning in life began to transform self-discovery through travels. Travelers seek better things with a sense of discovery not only in their leisure time but also throughout their lives. Their utopian ideals, on the other hand, contradict restrictive modern society. Hence, travelers seek a different way of life, with their personal choice and claiming the right to self-determination. Travelers are aware of their belief that the repetitive nature of modernity insidiously control them and extinguishes their willpower. They see that modern society is distancing them from the rhythm of nature, and instead substitutes work schedules, working hours, rushed times, and consumption-oriented leisure time since modern life first organizes the working life and then determines free time depending on the working life. At this point, the travelers return to the system within the time, place, and consumption patterns that modern life has created for them to

spend their leisure time. Thus, even ordinary things such as being close to the earth, reaching rural life, growing tomatoes, or fishing are becoming far away.

According to Macbeth (2000), travelers' criticism of social life is divided into three categories: personal/social, political, and environmental. Still, the fourth category underlying the other three is identified as excesses. This is an underlying concern in that the notion of too much, too many, too big or too little appears in an adjectival sense throughout what they say. Too much materialism, too many people, too big government, and too little diversity in urban life are the main problems for travelers (Macbeth, 2000). Travelers refuse materialism and ownership as independent persons who need to take responsibility for their own lives. The desire to reach their lifestyle causes travelers to travel or being on the road to the time or space they imagine. Being on the road means culture, nature, authenticity, and remoteness as it reduces their alienation. Therefore, travelers' lifestyle refuses status-oriented lifestyle based on consumption. They escape from career-oriented, artificial, and repetitive urban life. Therefore, escape appears as a concept that has emerged in travel motivation research. However, studies are repeated and results in terms of different types of tourism and tourists are again attributed to the motivation to escape.

Gottlieb (1982) claims that what is sought in a journey is the inversion of everyday life. Today's travelers also pursue this. Travelers, who intend to overcome the opposition between themselves and the society they live in, pursue to find natural and untouched areas in their world. This seeking is seen as a utopia that is desired to be reached. With such an identity seek, the traveler satisfies both the pleasure and the need for actualization with real experiences (Aktaş Polat, 2016). Travelers meet with other travelers on the road at long distances and in places such as Southeast Asia, South America, and Africa. In these travels, places that match the concepts of unusual, exotic, authentic, and distant are perceived as more utopian.

It would not be wrong to say that humanity has been traveling through history. The reasons for these travels differ in each period. In this direction, when we look at the tourism literature, research about why people travel is always alive. The first research on this subject was conducted by Grisntein in 1955 (Rızaoğlu, 2012). The concept that emerged from this research was escape. In other words, the need to move away from daily/routine life can be met because of the change from one place to another. After this research, studies on travel motivation have been increasing quantitatively since the 1970s.

Gray (1970) defined travel as the desire for sunlust/wanderlust. Afterward, Dann (1977, 1981) evaluated travel with a push factors approach. Dann focused on escape factors and explained it as an escape from the routine, the familiar, the ordinary, and the usual. In addition to the escape factor, he stated that travel is a fantasy, self-image (prestige brought by travel), and a response to loneliness. By 1981, Dann explained both the push and pull factors. Since then, push and pull factors have drawn considerable attention in travel motivation literature.

The push and pull theory first identified the factors that caused migration to occur by Lee (1966)

in his article a theory of migration. According to this theory, both the place of residence and destinations have to push and pull elements. Crompton (1979) also explained the concept of travel by using push and pull factors. Push and pull factors are generally accepted approaches in the literature on travel motivation (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994).

The travel career ladder (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983), allocentrism-psychocentrism based on tourist personality (Plog, 1974), the need for consistency versus complexity (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981) and social-psychological approach (Iso-Ahola, 1982) are other the major research on travel motivation. The following research repeats the previous ones. This methodological uniformity stands out in terms of both research method and approach, and research has been repeated continuously and questioned only in different groups, cultures, and tourism types. This has led to similar push and pull factors being presented as a result.

There are also individual-based approaches to travel motivations. According to Currie (1997), it is necessary to compare the tourists' behaviors to establish whether they distinguish between the home and the destination atmosphere. Thus, compensatory (Burch, 1969), spill-over/familiarity (Wilensky, 1960), liminal (van Gennep, 1908), and liminoid (Turner, 1969) concepts were used to construct the behaviors framework. Accordingly, there is an escape or temporary change from daily life through travel (Currie, 1997). Unlike previous studies, the focus of Currie's study was to compare home and destination behaviors rather than motivations.

Taheri et al. (2017) developed the conceptual model of the liminoid space to explain how play, experiential involvement, and atmosphere contribute to tourists' engagement. Afterward, the model was developed into the liminoid which occurs within leisure activities. According to Collinson and Baxter (2022), this conceptual model needs to be empirically proven. Therefore, their study tested the model and applied the theory of the liminoid to cultural heritage sites. Accordingly, they explored how liminal spaces extend tourists' engagement during traveling to cultural heritage sites by testing the conceptual model of the liminoid space. But the study was conducted to promote practical and managerial implications from a management and marketing perspective rather than a sociological or psychological perspective.

It may be suggested that new variables should be added to the related field and benefit from a different discipline. Providing tourism theory and the lack of other philosophical basis causes the problem that research in this field does not have a specific scope. Therefore, the authors believe this research will relate travel and utopia, which before was almost absent. Therefore, utopia should be discussed in the relevant literature as a new underlying concept.

3. UTOPIAN THOUGHT AND TRAVEL

Utopia often overlaps with different concepts such as absent, imaginary, and ideal place. All definitions emphasize that a utopia is an imaginary place. Utopia concept creates a specific environment, a different time, or place in the human mind, even if it is imaginary. Although artificial and fictional, the

utopia concept suggests a place that individuals experience. In the first utopias (Utopia, The City of the Sun, The New Atlantis) where spatial was taken as a premise, being present in different places was mainly discussed. Sometimes an existing place was changed, and sometimes a new place was designed. Thus, these imaginary designs were made more realistic by concretizing them through places. In other words, designed places were transformed into actual places (Maltaş Erol & Görmez, 2016). From the end of the 18th century, a tendency from place to time began in utopian writings. The utopias highlighted the tendency to be in the same place at a different time from being in a different place at the same time. Although utopias showed a radical change and the phenomenon of time came to the fore, seeking different places has always continued.

The utopia concept initiated by Thomas More, who is considered the creator of the utopia genre, is based on the discovered island description during a journey. More's Utopia is a pagan state built on reason and philosophy. For travelers, utopia is the combination of travel and life, created through the formation of free spaces, entertainment, nature, and communes. The spaces built on this are large but not unlimited.

Travel and being on the road are key concepts for tourism. Being on the road changes the perception of time and becomes a utopian journey. Even though it does not show parallels with utopia, the period of going from one place to another, rather than reaching that being on the road may be more valuable for travelers. Perhaps utopia is also valuable since it has never been reached. The possibility for travelers to reach terra incognita and the idea of creating their own utopian spaces with other travelers always maintain their enthusiasm and therefore require traveling. Furthermore, the possibility of equality, happiness, and freedom mean travel is a utopia, since "there is no path to happiness: happiness is the path." Therefore, travelers are constantly traveling for happiness.

There is doubt about the definitions of the traveler who leaves their home and experiences transient travel. This doubt arises with the word transient since some travelers have been traveling for months or even years. So, transient travels are replaced with utopian seek. The general descriptions of the traveler are inadequate to help us understand the utopian designs of the roles embraced by them. Travelers often want to actualize their dreams that exist in the utopian ideal, interacting with culture, nature, and locals. Similarly, the development of natural, adventure, and cultural tourism represents travelers actualizing their utopian dreams. For most tourists, the actualization of dreams in this utopia depends on holidays and annual leave. However, the action and experiences of travelers go beyond the rules, and boundaries are drawn since their attempts to escape become the whole purpose of life, and their dreams of staying away from their homes come true. Although often referred to as tourists, these travelers are also a utopian community that supports a utopian lifestyle.

It is inevitable for travelers to form a new community, seeing modern society as something that takes them away from the rhythms of nature and instead changes the process of artificial creations (Macbeth, 2000). The aim of achieving a

better lifestyle and ideal spaces can be interpreted as a libertarian thought in terms of achieving the right to self-determination while traveling. This is about most travelers moving to do new things in their lives. Therefore, novelty is an important utopian thought where everything is new and is an extension of previous experiences or an element that includes the progress of experiences. Exotic and authentic environments, new activities, or unusual social norms allow travelers to enter a parallel universe where priorities may differ. Travelers seek exotic and authentic environments to avoid ordinary everyday life from utopian travels.

Cultural tourism has a fundamentally utopian idea, which includes meeting with locals and learning about their lifestyles, cultural heritage, and life experiences (Brokensha & Guldborg, 1992). This is how travelers feel about their travels and they find them authentic and instructive to improve themselves. Meeting with locals, learning new lifestyles and cultures, and traveling for self-improvement are outcomes of utopian thought. They seek authentic and instructive experiences through solo travel rather than mass tourism and escape attempts are becoming a lifestyle. Eventually, they become a utopian community as a subculture that also embraces a utopian lifestyle.

The first utopias begin with a group of travelers accidentally traveling to an unknown place in a distant country of the world. In the later utopian tradition, as in the dystopias of Zamyatin, Huxley, and Orwell, we take place directly in the daily lives of utopias (Kumar, 1987). In fact, travel and the discovery of new places offered us new worlds by revealing utopias. While travel in the past inspired utopias, now utopias and dystopias encourage travel. While utopias have become imaginary places where happy people live, dystopias are where people live as if they are happy. In addition, utopias inspire travelers to be constantly on the move.

Although the concept of utopia has different meanings, it is perceived as an escape from the daily routine. In terms of tourism, a utopia is a destination that travelers dream of and travel to. In this context, Christou and Farmaki (2019) discovered the extent to which a utopian experience is supported by tourism stakeholders in Iceland, which has a utopian description with its unique geography and natural events, and to understand how tourists perceive such initiatives. The themes primarily identified for the Icelandic destination have been those who believe in myth and elves and unbelieving tourists. Believing tourist groups tend to share information about their travels. Tourism stakeholders, on the other hand, refer to the fact that these myths live in rural areas to increase interest. That is why they sell tourist products such as books and souvenirs telling of these myths. As a result, although tourists are affected by this utopian case, it is a marketing strategy that is mostly built by mainstream tourism businesses. Even if this is the case, interest and enthusiasm for the tourist are reasons for travel.

In another study, Spilanis and Vayanni (2004) argue that the sustainable tourism strategies applied in the Aegean islands become unsustainable. The authors determined that a utopian understanding should be revealed for potential tourists instead of an artificial environment. The importance of planning a utopian destination that tourists want to reach for agriculture, culture, gastronomy, and

nature-based tourism was presented. Furthermore, utopia is related to authenticity in their study. In other words, it is considered a utopian space where tourists want to reach their destination to have unique, local experiences.

Sun and Xie (2019) claimed that cruise tourism offers physically different places and emotional experiences, accepting it as the basis of consumption, experience, value, and mobility against modernity. According to the authors, the constant sensory arousal encourages the person to try excessive/extraordinary experiences on escaping from the daily life of cruise tourism. As a utopian space, sensational and unique geographic experiences have been proposed in three themes, both boundless and regular time experiences. Additionally, Isaac (2015) linked the concepts of utopia and dystopia with dark tourism. The view the author maintains in this context may be that one built current of thought as a utopia can become a dystopia for others. For instance, the social order performed during the Second World War by Nazi Germany is a dystopian order for humanity (especially for Jews). From this point of view, movements for dark tourism may be based on utopian motivation for one side and dystopian motivation for the other.

4. TOURISTIC UTOPIAN SPACES

According to Aristotle, happiness is a concept that overlaps with Eudaimonia, improvement, or success rather than instant happiness (Warburton, 2011). He argues that people can only reach true happiness by experiencing a sense of achievement and continuous improvement. True happiness is not momentary or about how one feels. When the right emotions are experienced at the right time, people try to increase these right times. This effort of the traveler is to reach utopian spaces by traveling.

Utopia (More), The City of the Sun (Campanella), and the New Atlantis (Bacon) are classical utopias that emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe. In these utopias, imaginary places are depicted as places that offer true happiness. A rich creation of utopia and dystopia began in the 20th century, just after Looking Backward (Bellamy), which was later written. William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Theodor Hertzka's *Freiland*, HG Wells' *A Modern Utopia*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and George Orwell's 1984, take us to contemporary writers such as John Kenneth Galbraith (*The New Industrial State*), Theodore Roszak (*Where the Wasteland Ends*), Ursula le Guin (*The Dispossessed*), Ivan Illich (*Medical Nemesis*), and José Saramago (*Blindness*). After the classical utopias, utopias and dystopias began to engage. The books being a utopia, or a dystopia began to be left to the reader's perception. Despite this, books that are referred to both utopia and dystopia also have shown.

Rozenburg (1995) examined Ibiza Island in his research. According to the author, until the 1970s, there were a few family hostels and few visitors on the island. However, foreign investors started to serve a mass tourism movement with the construction of large hotels. The island where agricultural life is dominant has changed to capitalist production with the negative effect of tourism. In this modernization process, nature was destroyed because of unbalanced growth and change. After this period, the Hippie groups, who traveled from Barcelona to

obstacle. But one day they will have surely been traveling.

ii. The travelers, whose motivation to approach is greater than escape, are more dissatisfied with social life than reaching utopia and do not see themselves belonging to society. Perhaps utopia is a period rather than a destination, or they perceive the society they live in as dystopia. Although there is always the thought of leaving everything behind, there is doubt about getting somewhere.

iii. In the long run, travelers want to travel all the time and satisfy betweenness. Hence, traveling becomes a way of life. Their utopian seek starts to be the most valuable thing day by day. Ultimately, going back home becomes the last option and they try to be on the road.

As a result, according to the model, the travel period is influenced by the level of motivation. This affects variables such as the travel and accommodation period of travelers. Although we do not aim to do so in the paper, the relationship between the motivation to escape and approach can explain the behavior of travelers in both social life and utopia. In this respect, future studies can distinguish the difference between travelers. However, studies should be ethnographical, if possible, and supported by participant observations and interviews.

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This article is a review of travelers' thoughts. First, the concept of utopia was associated with travel. We think that travelers want to reach their utopia in their travels. Looking at the characteristics of utopian destinations, it can be stated that the tourism sector is not a chimneyless industry. Nowadays, over tourism shows this more clearly. Utopian travels are a response to the tourism industry. Therefore, a traveler against mass tourism makes their travels with a utopian motivation. In this context, a travelers' utopia may be the dystopia of a mass tourist. This utopia/dystopia dichotomy will always be a matter of discussion given the thought and future of tourism.

We named the model as a dichotomy since the perception of utopia and dystopia varies in each traveler and there is a paradoxical structure between concepts. The main variables in the model are social life, destination, and distance between the two. As stated, the relationship between travel and utopia was determined in this research. In other words, we accepted that travel motivation is the idea of reaching a utopia.

Social life may be a dystopia for travelers who think they will reach utopia may reach dystopia. In other words, after reaching the destination, utopia can turn into a dystopia for travelers. Therefore, we emphasize the importance of the concept of betweenness. Although betweenness is the process between social life and utopia for travelers, it can be considered a different phenomenon. In addition, we can recommend that this model should focus primarily on the daily lives of individuals with an ethnomethodological approach. The first step of the model can begin with the question of what individuals' daily lives mean to them. Furthermore, it is necessary to specify the stage that the travelers go through while reaching the destination, which may be utopia or dystopia. Like the concept of utopia and dystopia, this model has a cyclical structure. It can be questioned where and why the next stop of

the travelers who reach the destination is.

The escape and approach processes in the betweenness are one of the most critical points for this research. Questioning this process can add a different perspective to research in the future. In addition, the model needs to question the relationships and interactions of travelers before, during, and after the travel process. The model we propose is an output of this research. This model can guide our future research. We also plan to develop this model with different variables and relationships since cognitive and behavioral travel and the phenomenon of utopia are constantly changing.

Like everything else, tourism and its elements have changed. Even looking at the famous travelers (Evlia Çelebi, Marco Polo, James Cook, Christopher Columbus, Ibn-i Battuta, etc.), it is easily seen that they acted with different motivations during the period. The travelers and their utopian travels discussed in this paper are an indication of this. Ultimately, travels based on utopia or dystopia can be regarded as an indication that classification will be conducted even within themselves. Understanding travel thoughts can also answer the question of what social life has or does not have for travelers. Although classifying academically makes it easier for researchers, there is no single place, time, and reality for people. Each traveler's thoughts and perspectives are unique.

6.1. Limitations

In this study, we discuss the relationship between utopia and travel. Therefore, the research is in the conceptual framework. As explained, utopia is what is wanted and desired to be reached briefly. Although people move to reach the utopia they have created in their minds, they may not be able to move independently of current reality. Hence, there is an important limitation to this research. Although there are different experiences experienced by each person from a micro perspective, situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Aebli et al., 2022; Bakar & Rosbi, 2020; Qiu et al., 2020) and the Russia-Ukraine war (Sass, 2020) experienced in recent years prevent travel from a macro perspective. While this situation creates limitations for the research, it brings an environment of uncertainty for people (Santos & Moreira, 2021; Matiza, 2022). Given the uncertainty of the global economic outlook, Işık, Sırakaya-Türk, and Ongan (2020) predict that policy-related economic issues will have an impact on tourism demand beyond economic and noneconomic considerations. According to the authors, increasing uncertainty may have a negative impact on travel.

Although the socioeconomic situation of people, the fact that any country does not issue a visa, the individual adversities experienced, and the cultural context are different for each person (Şahin et al., 2014). On the other hand, wars and the global pandemic (Gürsoy & Chi, 2020) are among the common situations that affect everyone. At this point, different factors motivate or not every person to travel. With these motivations, people may travel constantly or never travel (Farmaki et al., 2019). In other words, people may decide that the environment they live in is a utopia/dystopia and behave accordingly. It can be foreseen that the global uncertainties experienced in the past and today will also be experienced in the future. We do not include these situations in this study. Although it is not the generalization purpose of this research, it may be

unimaginable for people to act for the idea of utopia in the face of situations that affect everyone or have regional effects.

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