

„Wir düsen nach Süden!“ Tourism, Gender and the Body, c. 1970



Today tourism is one of the biggest leisure industries and a global force to be reckoned with. Apart from the perspective of economics, tourism has many other implications for the constitution of identities of both the tourist as the tourist destinations and hosts. This poster is a most apt illustration of the historical shifts in the tourist imagination, notions of propriety, gender and the body. Given its rather direct visual appeal, this poster would not adorn public space for long, without provoking serious discussion. As a socio-cultural contextualisation of this object will however point-out, such marketing strategies employed an established and accepted iconographic repertoire concerning the Mediterranean as a travel destination in the 1970's.

The democratisation of travel

The poster is part of the advert campaign of the German airline LTU in the 1970's, which was founded in 1955 and based in Düsseldorf. The LTU was part of a broader development in the transport sector and the tourist industry, where technical innovations, proliferation of airlines and decline in ticket prices effectuated a gradual popularisation and democratisation of areal tourism.¹ This trend is perfectly encapsulated in the motto of the LTU's chairman Kurt Conle: 'Fliegen ist für alle da'.² The introduction and breakthrough of the package tour as a dominant travel format consolidated this trend. In the 1970's Germany became one of the leaders in European travel to Mediterranean tourist destinations. In the late 1970s, the Spanish Mediterranean coast and Mallorca surpassed Italy as the most popular Mediterranean destination for German vacationers. But in the late 1950s,

¹ Hasso Spode, 'Der Aufstieg des Massentourismus im 20. Jahrhundert', in: Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Claudius Torp (ed.), *Die Konsumgesellschaft in Deutschland 1890-1990* (Frankfurt and New York, 2009), 114-128, 126-127.

² Walter Freyer, *Tourismus: Einführung in die Fremdenverkehrsökonomie* (Berlin, München and Boston, 2015), 154.

Spain was still absent from the imaginative maps of Germans.³ Turning Spain into a major tourist destination required not only a sufficient supply of comfortable, inexpensive hotels and enlarged air transport capacity, but also major advertising efforts by German travel companies.⁴

Strategies of Desire: Selling the three S's

The product an airline sells is speedy travel, but the advertisement of this product goes beyond the promise of swift and comfortable travel, by including and alluding to the enticement of travelling, the experience aboard and of arrival and of the pleasures to be enjoyed in the destination. In this respect, images in general and adverts in particular, play a vital role in the confirmation and consolidations of stereotypes and tropes. The advert does not so much represent a concrete place but an imagined 'destination', a configuration of stereotypes which allude to the tourist imagination.

The promise of unrestrained sexual contact has been an intrinsic, albeit covert, component of the travel experience and the imagination. During the Early Modern Era, the grand tour, sexual adventures were deemed to be essential rites de passage for the young men during their tour through the Continent.⁵ In the late nineteenth-century, the beach, as a vacation site, played a pivotal role in the liberation of the body from restraining 'Victorian' notions of decency and the introduction of a more hedonistic tourist habitus.⁶ The intensity and directness of this poster however is the product of a sexually liberated society. In the 1960's sex became increasingly commercialized and virtualized, as witnessed by the proliferation and commoditization of pornography and a more general relaxation of attitudes towards sexuality.⁷ This poster should be placed in this context, as the travel industry eagerly capitalized on this mental shift. During the great boom in tourism in southern Europe, eroticism became a key element in the iconography of the tourist imagination and in visual representations of the Mediterranean. The scarcely dressed female tourist adorning the beach became a standardised trope, as well as the *Latin Lover*.⁸

³ Christopher Kopper, 'The breakthrough of the package tour in Germany after 1945', in: *Journal of Tourism History*, 1 (2009), 67-92, 79-81.

⁴ See for German airline advertising strategies: Guillaume de Syon, 'Lufthansa Welcomes You: Air Transport and Tourism in the Adenauer Era', in: Pamela Swett et al. (ed.), *Selling Modernity: Advertising in Twentieth-Century Germany* (2007, Durham), 182-201.

⁵ Eric Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism* (London, 2015), 176.

⁶ Spode, 'Massentourismus', 116.

⁷ Pascal Eitler, 'Sexualität als Ware und Wahrheit: Körpergeschichte als Konsumgeschichte', in: Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Claudius Torp (ed.), *Die Konsumgesellschaft in Deutschland 1890-1990* (Frankfurt and New York, 2009), 370-388, 382-386.

⁸ See for a comprehensive analysis of the visual iconography surrounding Spain as a tourist destination in the 1950's and 1960's: Alicia Fuentes Vega,

Where the focus on traditional tourism was on *Bildung* and cultural education, mass tourism introduced a new habitus: the modern tourist was essentially interested in the three S's of sun, sea and sex. The localisation of these S's was of little importance; price and transport time were the most important factors in picking a vacation destination.⁹ This can also be seen in the poster as the 'South' functions as a generalising metonym. What is interesting about this poster is its multi-interpretability: on the one hand the female figure could be interpreted as being a local Mediterranean woman, alluding to masculine fantasy of uninhibited and easy sexual encounters with local women. On the other hand, the figure could be interpreted as an allusion to the promise of sexual liberation in the female tourist imagination, and where a stay in the South promised an experience of sexual liberation. In the 1950's advertisers eagerly employed a similar trope, where visual adverts, which conveyed an erotic undertone showed women indulging in inhibited contact with fellow male tourists. This interpretational ambiguity doubtlessly contributed to the rhetorical potency of this image.

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Bienvenida, Mr. Turismo. Cultura visual del Boom en Espana (Madrid, 2017), 293-311.

⁹ Spode, 'Massentourismus', 127.