I'M GOING ALONE: THE INDEPENDENT TRAVEL AS A SPACE OF RESISTANCE FOR WOMEN

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ABSTRACT
This study presents the female independent travel, in a background of the contemporary tourism scene, using leisure studies to analyze the objective and subjective dimensions of the experience of women in this type of experience. The exploratory study took place in the period from January to December 2014, in which fifteen Brazilian women were interviewed in depth, when it was possible to identify, through content analysis, the objective and subjective conditions that independent travel occurs, considering the different contexts of tourist experiences (Bardin, 1977). The profile analyzed is of women with high educational qualifications, ranging from undergraduate to doctoral degree. Most of them were single, with no children, working in the humanities and social sciences, and visit from one to five countries independently. The performances of these travelers gain space, both in the public and private spheres, subtly transforming established patterns, breaking boundaries, deconstructing gender bias, and empowering women as subjects of rights. We assume, therefore, a social identity that positions us through feminist attitudes and behaviors (Swirsky & Angelone, 2015), who claim to denounce any form of repression, limitation and harassment of women's freedom, and this research appears as an invitation to explore new spaces of subjectivation in the feminine.

KEYWORDS
Independent travel; leisure; subjectivation; female resistance.

Introduction
“Whatever freedom we fight for, it must be a freedom based on equality”
Judith Butler

Discussions about gender, under the lens of travel and leisure, present a common and aggregating point: the process of subjectivation. Researchers of these subjects recognize and emphasize the need to deepen studies that integrate the themes to better understand the protagonism in postmodern society, besides adding value for human development. Applying this analysis to the independent travel and the role of subjectivity in the construction of the identity of the traveler, we explored the quality of experience and emphasize empowerment and the political role of this type of recreation for these women, resulting from their choices in leisure moments.

The leisure is understood hera as subjective experience, constituted by specific characteristics that contribute to the construction of satisfactory, positive and happy experiences,
capable of favoring human and social development (Cuenca Cabeza, 2006; Doistua, 2006). The study of the processes of subjectivation of women who travel alone generates a reflection on the performance of women and their political role as a citizen of rights and duties, since gender relations affect the way men and women construct their tourist experiences (Yang, 2017).

For a better understanding of the independent travel in the tourism scene, we will follow a trajectory that demarcates the leisure, contextualizing the participation of the contemporary woman, under this focus, to bring up the objective and subjective dimensions involved in the activity. In this regard, we will use the perspective presented by Baptista (2016), when discussing the importance of observing the cultural and political dimension in the debate about leisure studies, since it seems essential to deepen the issues surrounding the theme. This perspective will make it easier to understand the transformations of social relations in postmodernity, the independent travel.

The discoveries and learnings experienced by women on independent travel favor a series of possibilities regarding their performances, thus understood as a discourse of freedom that concerns the active nature of the relationship between the individual and society, related to the discourse that inhabits the body, which makes this body and so is confused with it (Butler, 2004). In this way, performing is crossing geographic, emotional, ideological, political and personal boundaries; is to become someone else and yourself at the same time; is to empathize, react, grow and change (Schechner, 2014).

In this understanding, the women who are the object of this study update and deconstruct the discourse on the place and role of women in contemporary society, with their behaviors and performances during the experience of the trip. In other words, there may be other ways of being and different ways of being and acting in society, as Schechner (2014, p.725) states: "we must imagine, invent and perform alternative ways of becoming ourselves."

**Methodology**

The information collected is the result of fifteen in-depth interviews with Brazilian women who, through question-guides, presented their travel experiences, with questions tailored to the specific objectives and particularities of this study. The interviews were conducted between January and November 2014. Of the fifteen interviews conducted, six took place in person and nine were conducted digitally, using Skype, with an average duration of one hour of conversation. By identifying the objective and subjective conditions that such travels occur in different contexts of tourism experiences, this study makes use of qualitative research tools to understand the reality studied.

The profile analyzed is of women with high educational qualifications, ranging from undergraduate to doctoral degree. Most of them were single, with no children and originate from the south, southeast and central-west regions of Brazil. As for the professional performance, the predominance is in human and social sciences. Most visited from one to five countries independently, although three of the fifteen travelers interviewed have visited more than twenty countries alone.

To analyze empirical data, we use content analysis as an approach, since it is the theory capable of recognizing the active role of the subject in the production of knowledge, in ad-
dition to the personal and objective meaning that is concretized in social practice and that manifests itself from of social, cognitive, subjective, evaluative and emotional representations, necessarily contextualized (Bardin, 1977; Franco, 2008). We emphasize the importance of qualitative studies on gender and tourism, which favor a greater understanding on issues that go beyond the differences between men and women, be them cisgender or transgender. This includes subjectivity, preferences, yearnings, fears, tendencies, and possibilities. In this understanding, analyzing the interviewees' testimonies can allow us to monitor the discourses, practices and power relations that determine the areas of resistance of women in independent travel (Mehta, 1999).

Leisure and resistances: independent female travel

In the current context in which there is multiple possibilities of experiencing globalized tourism, it is important to delineate the scenario of the activity that unfolds dynamically in Brazil and in the world, since when we treat tourism, its characterization and trends, we are talking with the world of travel and travelers. Both complement each other and are intertwined in a very particular and interdependent way.

Although virtual experiences are increasingly accessible - and inclusive - to replace in-place experience, nothing compares to what is experienced and felt in a real way. It means that subjective experience is vital for the characterization and qualification of tourism, thus reinforcing that the future of travel is not a destination or a place where one wants or should be, but a journey that starts from where we are today where we want to be tomorrow. This is related to the idea that the process and the way in which a given journey is developed are more important, since they can result in a greater learning for the individual.

In the past, the use of free time for recreational and leisure activities was a privilege of the wealthier classes. In addition to an individual need to maintain physical and mental health, at that time leisure was a possibility to maintain and stimulate life in society. In this way, it is not difficult to understand the importance of the travel in the construction of one's own subjectivity. In fact, allied to the aspects that characterize independent travel is the transformative and recreational potential of the experience of leisure as an experience that transforms.

In this study, we opted to apply the concept of humanistic leisure, especially since it is the most consistent with the quality of the independent travel, object of this research. In the same way, the ethical and political dimension, raised by Inchaurraga (2012), helps us to reflect on the spaces of subjectivation that women have in contemporary society, transiting in diverse cultures. In travel, these women carry the context of their culture of origin with them, which leads us to believe that weak leisure has already been a practice.

The definition of humanistic leisure comprises a time of no work, associated with the practice of innumerable leisure activities, among them the travel itself. It is interpreted as a subjective experience, constituted by specific characteristics that contribute to the construction of satisfactory, positive and happy experiences, capable of favoring human and social development, as well as being an excellent opportunity for personal self-fulfillment and enrichment (Rhoden, 2014; Martins, 2014; Cuenca Cabeza, 2006; Monteagudo et al., 2014).
The keen gaze of the humanistic leisure about the necessity and importance of being educated for self-development can be an alternative way to reduce social conflicts, which before becoming global, are personal and subjective. As Bruhn’s (2009) explains, modern leisure lives contradictions that have origins in promises and achievements linked to the discourse of pleasure and freedom, resulting from an artificial isolation from life building walls of intolerance.

In this perspective, the humanist leisure (Cuenca Cabeza, 2006), the serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982) and the fluid experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) have many aspects in common as they result in optimized experiences characterized by a high level of personal fulfillment and support the interpretations made from empirical research data. According to Cohen (2013), both in the fluid experience of leisure and in serious leisure, there is a significant personal effort to achieve identity and experience a sense of completeness.

We can say that one of the most significant meanings of travel, considering the point of view of subjectivity is to transform. Para Romano (2013, p. 35), “the tourist itinerary is designed to create the illusion of the traveler-discoverer” and it is certain that the individual experience resulting from the act of traveling, in its essence, can be transformative, new and unique. Initially, it is fundamental to understand what the journey consists of, what challenges and perspectives from the personal and subjective perspective of the traveler, and then understand what possibilities the independent trip offers, in view of the construction of a new paradigm of behavior for the XXI century.

Gender issues and the challenges to understanding them permeate all the major themes of modernity, for which humanity is continually in conflict. This research considers the feminist movement under different and complementary perspectives, based on its claims and reflections on the relevant recent literature on gender, since the theme crosses aspects of economic, social, cultural, political and environmental life, such as Beauvoir (1970); Scott (1995), Butler (2003), Braidotti (2002) and Saffioti (2001).

The independent journey we deal with in this study is inserted in the context of leisure and refers to the Brazilian woman, who travels or travels at least once unaccompanied abroad. Among the qualities and characteristics found in the testimonies were: flexibility of the script made by them; international destination; private lodging (hostel, hotel, inn, other); spend most of their time alone and make their personal and leisure choices always (Chai, 1996; Fool, 1999; Stanford, 2017). Or, what Myers (2017) characterizes as:

Independent travelers, who are also known as free independent travelers (FITs), tend to be environmentally conscious, enthusiastic, and motivated to experiment with new ways of life. They are usually out-of-the-ordinary explorers, thirsty for experiencing the "real thing" and avoiding mass tourism in favor of a more individualistic approach to travel (Myers, 2017, p.162).

The travel always provoked deep and intense transformations of the world views of peoples and cultures, especially since modify the traveler, explorer. Perhaps this is the substantial gain of the travel: to give the practitioner an idea of the discovery of the self, the inner self, based on living in societies very different from their own. Therefore, the self is constructed, modified and reproduced in the interaction with other people. More than a fixed self, everyone has multiple selves, which are permeable and context dependent (Cohen, 2010; Vaughan & Hogg, 2002).
For Berdychevsky et al. (2013), gender relations affect the way men and women build their tourism experiences. Adventurous women, who propose to travel alone and independently, describe their journeys as an identity project, as well to gain strength, independence and freedom (Elsrud, 2006). Thus, women’s work gains empowerment as the questioning fights the norms that perpetuate the subordination of women (Hanmer e Klugman 2015). Yang (2017) states that, in view of the different realities between the Western and the Eastern world, about the scenario of women on an independent journey, there is a social trend of transformation at the global level, because of the advancement of gender equality worldwide, the access to education and employment.

Nowadays, taking as presuppositions the countless achievements of women in the social, political, cultural and economic fields, it is increasingly evident that female subordination is not something natural or even definitive. Just as identities and performances are plural, diverse and dynamic, so are gender relations. For Berdychevsky et al. (2013, p. 83), tourism experiences offer a space for women to express repressed desires as they offer a fertile ground for self-discovery and self-discovery, "whether through the expression of the authentic self or through experimentation with alternative identities."

Thus, the women who make up the object of this study update and deconstruct the discourse on the place and role of women in contemporary society, with their behaviors and performances during the experience of the trip, since gender is an essential determinant of freedom of travel (Khan, 2011).

There is, therefore, in the independent travel, a space that invites liberation, transgression and transposition of norms, which represses who we are or who we can become, precisely because it takes place in an environment outside the everyday, the ordinary. Put another way, there may be other paths to be followed and different ways of being and acting in society, as Schechner (2014: 725) states: "we must imagine, invent and perform alternative ways of becoming ourselves".

In this logic, to constitute a personal identity is also a performative embodiment that is procedural, since the subjects are always on stage and within the performance. It is a process that suggests a performance through the body. Likewise, it is possible to play the social role in a variety of ways, such as a play, which requires a text and interpretation, where individuals can expand their cultural universe through the corporeal universe, through subversive performances of various kinds (Butler, 1990). This means that we choose how and what we want to perform. Butler (2015) notes that we are affected by something outside us, for what comes from outside activates and informs who I am (Butler 2015b). In the leisure practices, the performance represents beyond a lifestyle, can also be a source of stability and well-being for the subjects.

The route, the path of travel on a journey has a value, and it can be rich and enjoyable to pass through it. In this search for the world, the traveler searches for himself, seeks his identity (Figueiredo & Ruschmann, 2004). There is, after all, an individual search that at the same time is collective, especially for giving meaning to personal existence with diversified experiences, but which have meaning.

The construction of subjectivity in Hegel (1992) occurs only in the production of consciousness and implies a way of recognizing oneself free, of constructing oneself and of making oneself in conflict with the world. However, for the philosopher, one part of the other is in
me, and the unity of self-consciousness reflects itself from the world in a dialectical process: I only know myself from my relationship with myself and with myself. The other acts as a mirror, which manifests my reflection and, in relation to it, I find myself.

Leisure has a specific relationship with existential time, since this process of recognition of one’s own subjectivity needs an idle time to be validated. Regarding the women studied, they experience new spaces and times to experience leisure, since it is embedded in a broad social network dynamics, which also contributes to give better quality to the experience and the use of that time. For travelers, even if this line separating time from leisure from time of leisure is tenuous, there is a gain in the importance of that time, objectively and/or subjectively. Besides the time to relax and rest, idleness allows a dimension of expression of the human being, a space-time for the recovery of the self. Looking at one of the motivations most studied in tourism, leisure, we seek to analyze the results and reflect deeply on the perception of gender in the process of constructing new behaviors.

In the case of travelers, they had to negotiate and reaffirm their purpose in innumerable situations throughout their journeys, which shows that travelers need to be vigilant and ready to defend themselves against possible harassment or constraints inherent in their status as women. For Jordan and Aitchison (2008) when alone in public spaces, travelers remain in a state of self-vigilance, precisely because they feel observed under a sexualized look. This tension, because of the differences between the gender roles established by society, can be exemplified by the fact that women interviewed do not enjoy the freedom to go to bars and restaurants at night, when they are alone, and are subtly compelled to dress in a discreet. Compared with the study by Mehta (1999) and Yang (2017), travelers expressed fear of going out at night alone, but admit that they must continue to move forward, following their journeys, despite the risks and dangers of which they are constantly recalled, whether in specialized travel guides, relatives, or headlines of violence against women tourists around the world.

The study by Hatton and Trautner (2012), presents an ordinary scenario, where the images of hypersexualized women prevail, to the detriment of the powerful and successful. This is corroborated by the testimony of most of the travelers in this study who, when approached or victims of harassment, because of their Latin physical type and because they are alone, feel threatened, whether in Florence or Paris. It is as if they are totally or partially 'misplaced' everywhere, as if they are nowhere, which can be an uncomfortable, sometimes disturbing experience (Bauman, 2005; Trigo 2015).

If on the one hand there is vulnerability, on the other there is resistance. On this, it means to say that there is a paradox between violence, vulnerability and resistance, because, when we resort to the law against violence, we sometimes legitimize it (Butler, 2003). In fact, no one wants to be identified as vulnerable, such as the susceptibility admitted by the women interviewed in this study. These women react to social stereotypes and prejudices because they are women, single, alone, Brazilian, Latina, which are experienced in subtle but also aggressive ways. Then, the more they affirm the differences, the greater the power these differences assume, since resistance requires overcoming this condition of vulnerability (Butler, 2015a).

Physical vulnerability is what travelers most repudiate by denouncing situations of harassment, embarrassment and/or deprivation of the freedom to come and go. We may also...
consider that there is a less positive side to the heteronomous gaze, and it can be very negative, even limiting the possibilities of these women, even if it does not affect them too much. Another aspect to consider is the limitation in the choice of their garments, which prevents them from wearing clothes that they desire, even if they are sensual, so as not to attract attention and cause cases of harassment. These aspects exemplify the innumerable restrictions and threats that women are constantly subjected to on these journeys.

As we have seen, there is still much to advance in women’s empowerment processes, as well as in the discussion of the real implications in women's daily lives and in the existing areas of resistance. In short, this type of travel can be understood as a form of weak leisure as a resistance and subversion of the stereotyped concept of women, and this study, in turn, gives light to the political dimension of women's independent travel, whether they are aware of it or not.

It is in the context of exposing the vulnerability, of performative acts, of breaking paradigms that this study has developed. The expansion of the feminine in the scenario of independent travel evidences this resistance, as claimed by the interviewees in this study, who, indignantly, demand this space of action and recognition of the legitimacy of the mobility of their bodies as a political and social instance.

Conclusions

Although contemporary social transformations are responsible for the access of women to the predominantly masculine spaces, such as independent travel, and this access is still restricted and permeated with risks, constraints, prejudices and limitations, in which modern women continue with their struggle against oppression and exploitation (Porter & Schänzel, 2018; Byrne, 2003; Myers, 2010; Khoo-Lattimore & Wilson, 2017; Wilson & Little, 2008). Among the main disparities between the genders are: unequal wages; types of contract (part-time or full-time); marriage and children; specific qualification; culture, stereotypes and social values, among others.

The scenarios presented in this study can be modified at any time since they are under the forces of several external agents, which may mean the emergence of new demands. Recently, these gaps have been filled by in-depth studies capable of identifying and analyzing the new behaviors and trends existing in the context of tourism and in the travel universe, as well as contributing suggestions that add value to human development.

Another perspective for future studies would be to identify women who travel to take courses, itineraries and visits to destinations and spaces linked to self-development and spirituality. Or, to deepen the researches on the obstacles, limitations and constraints to the processes of subjectivation of independent travelers found in this study.

In the scenario of trends for the development of tourism worldwide, this study elects’ women as the protagonist of their experiences in independent travel and all that this means. Therefore, the increased demand for this type of travel generates a series of specificities, novelties and requirements, and should be treated as a segment that should be better served by the market (Buhalis, 2001; McNamara & Prideaux, 2010). The discoveries and learnings experienced by women on independent trips favor a series of possibilities regarding their performances, thus understood as a discourse of freedom that concerns the active nature
of the relationship between the individual and society, related to the discourse that inhabits the body, which makes this body and so is confused with it (Butler, 2004).

In addition to these reflections, the study indicates dimensions still little investigated regarding independent travel in the female, able to delve into the needs, experiences and challenges of travelers. In view of this, among all the forms and possibilities of continuous emancipation that contemporary women enjoy, independent travel presents itself as a subtle path to the exercise of autonomy and to the revision of habits and customs.

Finally, the performances of these travelers gain space in both the public and private spheres, subtly transforming established patterns, breaking boundaries, deconstructing gender biases, and empowering women as subjects of rights. They update and deconstruct the discourse on the place and role of women in contemporary society, with their behaviors and performances during the experience of the trip. From a closer look at independent travel, this study intends to add values to be incorporated by society, capable of expanding the possibilities of the processes of subjectivation in the feminine.

**Bibliographic references**


