

## Book Review: Medier og Turisme

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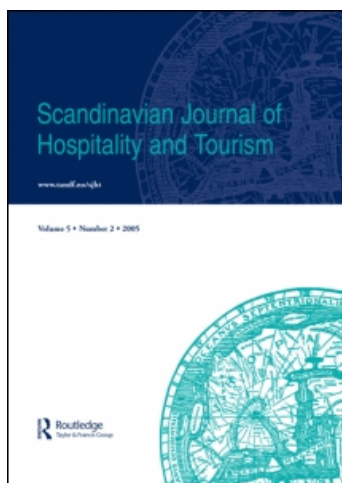
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## Medier og Turisme

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Medier og Turisme**

Jacob Linaa Jensen & Anne Marit Waade

Århus: Academica, 2009

207 pp., paperback, 268 DKK (€36)

ISBN 9788 776755225

*Medier og Turisme* [Media and Tourism] is a resourceful interdisciplinary contribution to tourism studies in Danish by Jacob L. Jensen and Anne Marit Waade – both affiliated with the Department of Information and Media Studies, Aarhus University. The authors endeavour to explore how tourism as a social practice evolves in contemporary mediated societies, and as such, the book is a highly topical starting point in an era where life is increasingly influenced by both old and new media. The book illustrates the complex and reciprocal relationships between media and tourism, by discussing media impacts on tourist behaviour as well as the “touristification” of popular culture. The book has an important point here – similar to earlier claims of a Danish tourism scholar, Anders Sørensen – as it emphasizes the significance of travel changing everyday life back at home. Hence, tourism is not only an industry producing liminoid and hedonistic “highlights” for the leisure class (in the form of chartertrips, short breaks or skiing holidays), but also a cultural template that structures our ways of viewing and understanding the world, as a whole.

The first three, co-authored chapters introduce the volume’s interdisciplinary scope, acting as a guide to a rapidly growing, but still immature field within culture and media research. The reader is presented with the intersection of mediatized culture (Hjarvard, 2008), mediageography and the spatial turn in communication studies (Couldry & McCarthy, 2004; Falkheimer & Jansson, 2006) as well as tourism and mobility as a mediatized practice (Urry, 2002) in an easy-to-read but not simplistic style. Of great value is a terminological “tidy-up” pursued in these chapters, contrasting parallelly existing concepts, each attempting to capture how social interactions are affected as the boundaries between physical and imaginary places are blurred by the media. In order to understand the integration of media and tourism in depth, the authors propose a new concept, *hypermedialisering* [hyper-mediatization], referring to an intricate process of communication and meaning-construction, which also involves agency (p. 31). The authors’ hypothesis is that media consumption changes and amplifies (augments) the tourist experience. This intensification may manifest itself in ritualized performances, inspired by media-driven templates, such as *media-matrices*. By unfolding the relationships between physical and mediated tourism, the authors distinguish between *mediering* [mediation] or representation of tourism sites in the media, *medialisering* [culturalisation] or circulation of mediated images in tourism communications and

*hypermedialisering*, i.e. the merging of media-created perceptions and own experiences in tourist behaviour. These three communication forms are presented in a model, as distinct processes linking physical, mediated and imaginary tourism together (p. 45). The model is problematic because it attempts to conceptualize overlapping processes and phenomena as separate and simultaneously compels two different analytical levels (the individual's micro-perspective vs. a structural, societal level) into a single framework. This schism is pursued throughout the book so that it subsequently splits into two, not entirely compatible parts.

The grand introduction is followed by analytical chapters, with hand-picked empirical illustrations of how various forms of mediatization structure our language and our ways of talking about tourism experiences. Inspired by Roman Jakobson's communication model, Anne Marit Waade explores new, eclectic genres beyond tourism marketing communication, such as advertorials for Camper walking boots designed along a tourist experience. The chapters appear as thorough genre studies (exceptionally suitable for educational purposes), but simultaneously contradict the assertion that the "analytical focus is on tourists" (p. 50). Since the point of departure is media analysis, no empirical illustration is provided whether and how individual consumption is influenced by the way the Camper boot brand weaves its storytelling into a Mallorcan tourism context. Neither is there a discussion of how travel series' staging of foreign cultures and national identities maintain and steer specific tourist gazes. The same critique applies to Jacob Linaa Jensen's excellent analysis of *The Beach*, as a self-referential, mediatized cinematic comment about tourism and globalization. What could illustrate *hypermedialisering* better than a study of how this film affected backpackers' behaviour in particular, for instance, by inspiring new tourism rituals in South-East Asia? Chapter 9 stands out as an exception here; by not only describing how detective stories turn places into consumption arenas of "dark tourism", but also demonstrates how crime stories become mainstays in destination marketing and commercial tourism innovation. The tourist experience of Ystad becomes augmented and modified by Mankell's *Wallander* series, as these fictional products turn into reference points in the tourist's self-dramatization and the debate about authenticity.

In the remainder, the book shifts from a media analytical perspective to structural studies of technological aspects of mediatized tourism, with two chapters written by Jakob Linaa Jensen. Chapter 10 describes the interaction dynamics and internal pecking order of an online travel community (Virtual Tourist), while Chapter 11 looks at Google Earth's virtual sightseeing potential to enhance tourist experiences. On the one hand, these chapters are timely clarifications of the affordances (action possibilities) of social media and the Internet, on the other hand, the analysis remains vague and shallow. Due to the narrow focus on the two web-based interfaces, the reader is given a hypothetical (rather than empirical) understanding of experience augmentation through the use of new media. The chapters are characterized by an anecdotal writing style which does not result in a proper synthesis and where bibliographic references only play a nominal role.

Despite these weaknesses, *Medier og turisme* is to be regarded as the first significant Danish contribution to understanding the complex interaction between communication, spatiality, globalization and tourism behaviour. The book works well as a

ground-breaking starting point for the interdisciplinary field of “mediated tourism”, although it opens up more questions and issues than it can address. While the authors succeed in pinpointing tourism-specific perspectives in media studies, the thesis of *hypermedialisering* is not studied directly. However, it is the reviewer’s strong belief that more contributions will soon follow in the wake of Jensen and Waade’s work to remedy this flaw.

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## **Tourism & Identity – Accumulated tourist experience and travel career narratives in tourists’ identity construction**

Karina Madsen Smed

PhD Dissertation

SPIRIT, Aalborg University

264 pp.

This thesis is an explorative study on the role of tourist experiences and travel career narratives for the social construction of identity. The study is based on 25 in-depth interviews with Danish and British couples or singles in the so-called “best-ager” segment, i.e. tourists in the age-group 50–65 years. The main research question – How is the travel career, as an expression of accumulated tourist experience throughout an individual’s life, instrumental in constructing identity? – is compartmentalised in three sub-questions: (i) How is a tourist experience characterised by members of the best-ager segment? (ii) How is the travel career used discursively to construct a narrative of identity at present? (iii) Are the tourist experiences accumulated decisive for the identity constructed and if so, in which ways? The theoretical base of the thesis is consumption theory, with particular focus on symbolic consumption and the role of tourism consumption in the construction of identity, as well as theories on social identity in general. The two main theoretical chapters on consumption and identity and tourist experiences function as a foundation for the three analytical chapters. These three chapters are structured as analytical building blocks, or steps, focussing on (i)