

Drugs and Tourists' Experiences

NATAN URIELY AND YANIV BELHASSEN

This study investigates the nature of drug-related tourist experiences from a phenomenological perspective. Based on 30 in-depth interviews with drug tourists and additional ethnographic data collected at various destinations of drug tourism, the empirical analysis yields four relevant insights: (1) drug-related tourist experiences are heterogeneous in nature and might involve either a pursuit of mere pleasure or a quest for profound and meaningful experiences; (2) for those who consume drugs for pleasure, the tourist experience is an intensified extension of their leisure routine; (3) the usage of drugs while traveling is not necessarily a form of escape from the reality of everyday life; and (4) the search for meaningful tourist experiences through drugs might involve the tourist's attempt to engage in either "authentic" aspects of the local culture or drug-related subcultures.

Keywords: *drug consumption; the tourist experience; cultural centers*

Deviance and tourism-related practices involve a departure from established behaviors and routines of everyday life (Ryan 1993; Ryan and Kinder 1996; Urry 1990). Whereas, however, the domain of deviance includes a variety of behaviors that are socially intolerable, most of the practices associated with tourism are socially tolerated (Ryan and Kinder 1996). The notion of "deviant" or "marginal" tourist behavior refers to practices that both are undertaken in a tourism-related context and operate at the fuzzy edge of social legitimacy or legality (Ryan 1993; Ryan and Hall 2001). Accordingly, tourists who engage in practices such as excessive drinking, unrestrained gambling, hooliganism, or visiting prostitutes might be considered to be deviant or marginal tourists. The current article, which examines the phenomenon of drug consumption in the context of tourism, falls within the study area of marginal tourists as well. Note that the usage of the terms *deviant* or *marginal*, rather than *criminal*, to describe these tourists expands this area of study to activities that might be legal yet morally divisive. This perspective seems to be especially appropriate with regard to the issue of drug usage, which is a focus of moral controversy in advanced industrialized societies (Eldridge 1971).

Much of the research about deviant or marginal tourist behavior is conducted in the context of sex tourism, in which issues such as tourist-host contact, risk perception, patterns of consumption, and self-identity receive a considerable amount of attention (Cohen 1982; Gay 1985; Hall 2002; Herold, Garcia, and DeMoya 2001; O'Connell 1996; Oppermann 1999; Wickens 1997). In contrast to the attention given to sex tourism, the phenomenon of drug consumption has hardly been touched on in tourism studies. Studies that have addressed the usage of drugs within the context of

tourism were mostly conducted in specific destinations that attract drug tourists, such as foreign travelers arriving in the Netherlands due to the liberal drug policies in that country (Korf 1995, 2002; van den Brink 1996), traveling youth attending the dance clubs in the United Kingdom (Sellars 1998), American and European tourists seeking to experience hallucinogenic drugs in the Amazon region (de Rios 1994; Fischer 1993), Americans who purchase prescription drugs for recreational purposes in Mexican border cities (Valdez and Sifaneck 1997), and drifter-style tourists who arrive at the beaches of Goa, India, and Koh Phangan, Thailand (Westerhausen 2002). These studies address various issues, including tourist motivations (de Rios 1994; Josiam et al. 1998; Sellars 1998), sociocultural and demographic profiles of tourists (Valdez and Sifaneck 1997), and tourist-host contact (de Rios 1994; Valdez and Sifaneck 1997; Westerhausen 2002). It appears, however, that this body of literature is still mostly descriptive in nature and that the phenomenon of drug consumption while traveling needs to be further examined in light of both existing theories and other seminal issues in tourism studies. This need is responded to in the present study, which examines the phenomenon of drug tourism with respect to a well-established theory in the study area of tourist experiences. Specifically, the current study aims to understand the nature of drug-related tourist experiences in light of Erik Cohen's phenomenological typology of tourist experiences (1979). Note that although Cohen's theoretical framework was recently revised in a study about the experiences of backpackers (Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai 2002), it has hardly been used for empirical purposes. Thus, the usage of this typology in the present research provides an additional opportunity to further develop Cohen's theory of tourist experiences beyond its specific contribution to the understanding of the drug tourism phenomenon.

The tourist experience has been a key issue in the study of tourism since its early days during the 1960s. Scholarship regarding this issue concerns the travel motivations and meanings that tourists assign to their travel experiences in light of everyday life in advanced industrialized societies. Unlike earlier theories of tourism, in which the tourist

Natan Uriely is the chairman of the Department of Hotel and Tourism Management at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel. Yaniv Belhassen is a lecturer at the Eilat Campus of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The research interests of both authors include the sociology of tourism and leisure. The authors wish to thank the Israeli Antidrug Authority for their support.

Journal of Travel Research, Vol. 43, February 2005, 238-246
DOI: 10.1177/0047287504272024
© 2005 Sage Publications

experience was monolithically referred to as a general type, the phenomenological approach presented by Cohen (1979) emphasized the variety of meanings and motivations associated with tourist experiences. Specifically, his well-established typology included five *modes of tourist experiences*, which span between the quest for mere pleasure on one end and the search for meaningful experiences on the other. Each of the five modes presented in this typology addresses both the tourist's attitude toward his or her own culture and routine living, and the motivations and meaning that he or she assigns to the engagement in the cultures of the visited destinations. As mentioned above, Cohen's phenomenological approach (1979) was recently revised by Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai (2002), who added a sixth mode of tourist experiences to the original typology. Specifically, the sixth mode presented by Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai (2002) refers to the experiences of tourists who might perceive their routine living at home as meaningful yet still feel the need to search for profound experiences while traveling.

The "six modes" version of Cohen's typology presented by Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai (2002) is used in the current study as an analytical instrument through which drug-related tourist experiences are empirically examined. In line with this typology, the analysis aims to provide answers to the following questions: (1) should the drug-related tourist experience be grasped as a shallow sort of relaxation that involves a pursuit of mere pleasure or as a meaningful quest for uniquely profound experiences; (2) in which way is the usage of drugs while traveling related to the tourist's estrangement from her or his routine of everyday-life and to her or his pursuit of meaningful experiences in other cultures; and (3) what is the nature of the cultural centers that attract drug tourists? The data analyzed below derive from in-depth interviews with drug tourists and additional ethnographic fieldwork conducted at various destinations of drug tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drug tourism is defined by Valdez and Sifaneck (1997, p. 880) as "the phenomenon by which persons become attracted to a particular location because of the accessibility of licit or illicit drugs and related services." This definition addresses three issues regarding the drug tourism phenomenon: who is a drug tourist, which locations are referred to as destinations of drug tourism, and which substances are labeled as drugs. Congruent with this definition, the locations in which drugs are accessible and consumed by tourists are defined here as drug tourism destinations. With regard to the substances referred to as drugs, it is argued in the present study that the definition presented above is too general and might include alcohol, caffeine, and a variety of medicines, which are socially tolerated or even appreciated to some extent. The notion of such substances as drugs is congruent with the premise of this article, namely, that the phenomenon of drug tourism is conceptually located within the domain of marginal tourism. Thus, it is suggested that the definition of drug tourism should refer only to drugs for which the act of their consumption operates at the fuzzy edge of social legitimacy or legality either in the host society or in the tourist's country of origin.

With regard to the question of who is a drug tourist, the definition presented by Valdez and Sifaneck (1997) seems to be too narrow. Specifically, their definition is limited only to tourists who correspond to both characteristics: (1) tourists for whom the consumption of drugs functions as a major travel motivation, and (2) tourists who have previous knowledge about the accessibility of drugs in the destination to which they arrive. Such an approach, in which tourists are defined according to their main motivation and preplanned activity, was recently criticized with regard to the definition of sex tourism (Oppermann 1999; Ryan 1998). Specifically, Ryan (1998) suggested that the inclination to reduce the definition of sex tourism to the tourist's main motivation of engaging in commercial sexual relations excludes many cases and settings in which this phenomenon occurs. Similarly, Oppermann's (1999, p. 256) criticism regarding the notion of a sex tourist as one who travels only for sex was based on his assumption that "the purpose of travel and the activities engaged in by the tourist are rarely, if ever, the sole purpose and activity." In congruence with these calls for wider definitions of tourists, the current study suggests that the drug tourism experience begins with the tourist's awareness of the existence of drugs in a specific destination and continues through to the acquisition processes of the drugs and their consumption. Accordingly, tourists who are aware of the accessibility of illegal or illegitimate drugs in a particular location and consume these drugs during their stay in these locations are defined here as drug tourists. This definition refers to both tourists who are attracted to a specific destination because of their previous knowledge about the accessibility of drugs at this site and tourists who become aware of the accessibility of drugs only during their stay in a particular location. Moreover, drug consumption might not necessarily function as the major travel motivation for these tourists but only as a byproduct of their tourist experience.

Overall, it is suggested that the term *drug tourism* refers to the phenomenon by which the tourist experience involves all of the awareness, consumption, and usage of drugs that are considered to be illegal or illegitimate in either the visited destination or the tourist's country of origin. This definition reflects both the phenomenological approach adopted in this study and its notion of drug tourism as a particular expression of marginal tourism.

The phenomenon of drug consumption in the context of tourism was initially addressed by Cohen in the context of the drifter type of tourism (1973). In line with Cohen's perspective (1973), Westerhausen's recent book *Beyond the Beach* (2002) refers quite extensively to the phenomenon of drug consumption as a salient element of the drifter subculture. Specifically, Westerhausen (2002) focused on the emergence of the beaches of Goa, India, and Koh Phangan, Thailand, as sites that attract backpackers who wish to engage in drug consumption. Although Westerhausen's study reports on the drug-related activities carried out in these destinations, however, his study disregards the subjective dimension of the travelers' experiences. Moreover, note that both Cohen (1973) and Westerhausen (2002) focused on drifter-style tourism rather than on the phenomenon of drug tourism, which extends to other forms of tourism as well. A direct interest regarding the phenomenon of drug tourism emerged mostly during the 1990s in studies that focus on specific destinations that attract drug-consuming tourists. For example, Korf (1995, 2002) used the term "drug

tourism” to describe the phenomenon of foreign travelers to the Netherlands due to the liberal drug policies in that country. The population of these drug tourists includes young people attracted mostly to the coffee shops where hashish and marijuana are legally consumed. Another population of drug tourists to the Netherlands was examined by van den Brink (1996), who referred to foreign heroin addicts attracted to the high quality of this drug, its low cost, and the health care provided to addicts at this location. Additional destinations that draw the attention of researchers are located in “Third World” regions or developing countries. For example, the arrival of American and European tourists to the Amazon region to experience a variety of hallucinogenic drugs has been examined by de Rios (1994) and Fischer (1993). In Central America, Valdez and Sifaneck (1997) focused on the Mexican border cities to which American citizens arrive to legally purchase Mexican prescription drugs, such as Valium, Rohypnol, Xanax, and Codeine, for recreational use (Valdez and Sifaneck 1997). The rise and fall of drug tourism centers in Southeast Asia, such as Goa in India and Koh Phangan in Thailand, was examined by Westerhausen (2002) in his aforementioned ethnography of drifter-style tourism.

The studies that focus on the phenomenon of drug tourism address some of the issues that receive a great deal of attention in tourism studies. With respect to the motivations of drug tourists, an interesting version of “staged authenticity” (MacCannell 1973) seems to be illustrated in de Rios’s (1994) study of American and European tourists who arrive in Amazonian cities to experience a drug called ayahuasca, which is a mixture of psychedelic plants. As part of a search for an authentic personal experience, these tourists engage in a special all-night religious ceremony presided over by a local shaman who represents the exotic savage. It appears, however, that the so-called shamans or native healers are local drug dealers dressed for deception. Note that in contrast to these tourists who search for a uniquely profound experience, other drug tourists, such as American students during their spring break vacation (Josiam et al. 1998), British vacationers in Ibiza (Bellis et al. 2000), and traveling youth who arrive to dance clubs in the United Kingdom (Sellars 1998), are characterized mainly as fun and recreation seekers.

Differences between drug tourists were also addressed by Valdez and Sifaneck (1997) in their study of the American citizens who arrive at the Mexican border cities to consume prescription drugs. A tripartite typology of these drug tourists, which is mainly based on sociodemographic characteristics such as age and subcultural appearances, includes collegiate, counterculture, and middle-aged adult tourists. This study also tackles the issue of tourist-host contact by describing the interaction between tourists and locals during the drug acquisition process. Although, however, Valdez and Sifaneck (1997) presented a detailed ethnographic description of tourists’ drug consumption in these Mexican border cities, their study does not provide general conceptualizations regarding the linkage between tourism and drug usage. In this respect, it seems that the need for research that draws on solid theoretical perspectives in tourism studies applies to the embryonic study area of drug tourism in general.

The need for general conceptualizations in the study of drug tourism is responded to in the present study, which examines the experiences of drug tourists in light of Cohen’s well-established phenomenological typology of tourist

experiences (1979). In line with the premise that “different kinds of people may desire different modes of tourist experiences” (Cohen 1979, p. 180), Cohen (1979) developed a typology of five modes of tourist experiences that span from the quest for mere pleasure on one end to the search for meaningful experiences on the other. Cohen (1979) conceptualized the search for meanings in terms of the “quest for a center” while stressing the notion of *center* as the zone of sacred moral values that exists in every society (Eliade 1969; Shils 1975; Turner 1973). Accordingly, the five modes of tourist experiences suggested by Cohen (1979) are characterized by the meanings assigned by travelers to both the center of their own societies in everyday life and their quest for “centers” of other cultures during their excursions.

Cohen (1979) referred to the first mode of tourist experiences as the “recreational mode” and associated it with entertaining but shallow activities. This mode of tourist experiences serves the need for “taking a break” from the pressures of daily living to restore the strength needed to cope. Individuals who engage in this type of tourist experience, although stressed by their daily living, are committed to the center of their own society. Their journey does not represent a quest for the center of the “other.” The second mode of tourist experiences, referred to as the “diversionary mode,” involves the pursuit of mere pleasure without any quest for a center as well. Whereas, however, the recreational mode is associated with those who perceive their daily life as meaningful, the diversionary mode refers to those alienated from the goals and values of their everyday existence. The latter are “centerless” people who escape from the boredom of their routine life by pursuing meaningless pleasure through superficial leisure activities. Similar to the diversionary mode, the three remaining modes of tourist experiences are also associated with people who are alienated from the center of their own society in their daily living. Unlike the recreational and the diversionary modes of experiences, however, these modes involve a search for meaning in the centers of other cultures while traveling. Specifically, the third mode of tourist experiences, termed the “experiential mode,” is compatible with MacCannell’s (1973) notion regarding the quest for authenticity. It involves the modern notion of authenticity as something that exists elsewhere and could be experienced through traveling. This type of tourist enjoys observing the “authentic life” of others without any attempt to be converted or even engaged in their life. The fourth mode of experiences, labeled the “experimental mode,” referred to travelers who do try to participate in the authentic life of others as part of their pursuit for an alternative to the center of their own culture. Because they are not yet committed to any of the ways of life that they engage in while traveling, they are as centerless as those who engage in the diversionary mode of experiences. Unlike the latter, however, the experimental mode traveler’s journey involves a quest for meaning. Interestingly, Cohen (1979, p. 189) suggested that this mode could be experienced through engagement with drugs or mysticism. The fifth mode of tourist experiences, termed the “existential mode,” refers to individuals who are already committed to an “elective center” that is culturally and geographically external to their own society. Although these individuals live their daily routine in a “spiritual exile” as a result of practical reasons, their travel to a remote center serves their desire to actualize and sustain their spiritual existence.

As mentioned earlier, a sixth mode of tourist experiences was recently added to Cohen's original typology by Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai (2002). In this regard, note that Cohen himself (1979) recognized that the typology ignores individuals who may be attached to more than one spiritual center. Such individuals might perceive their routine living at home as meaningful yet still search for profound experiences while traveling. Thus, although not included in the typology, Cohen (1979, p. 193) mentioned two additional groups of people ("humanists" and "dualists") who may be involved with more than one center. The experiences of such tourists—who might travel in the experiential, experimental, or existential modes without being alienated from their own society's culture—appear in the revised typology as a "humanistic mode" of tourist experiences (Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai 2002).

METHODS

The current study relies on ethnographic fieldwork methods including interviews and observations that were conducted during a period of 2 years during 2000-2002. The main source of data is 30 in-depth interviews conducted with homecoming tourists who comply with the definition of drug tourists suggested above. Note that by relying on a sample of 30 interviewees, the present study conforms to contemporary tourism research based on in-depth interviews (e.g., Elsrud 2001; Hunter-Jones 2004; Hyde and Lawson 2003; Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai 2002). Moreover, in compliance with conventional practice in qualitative research, the interviewing process in this study was continued until sufficient redundancy was reached. No claims are made, however, that this sample is representative of all drug-taking tourists. In terms of form of travel, the sample of interviewees included both institutionalized and noninstitutionalized tourists (Cohen 1972) to various destinations. In addition to 24 Israelis, the sample included interviewees from Europe and the United States. The interviewees ranged in age from 19 to 32; of these, 19 were men and 11 were women. All of the interviewees had completed high school, and by the time of the interview, about half of them were already obtaining postsecondary education. The interviewees were approached through snowball sample techniques, in which those already interviewed were asked to facilitate contact with other potential interviewees. Although some of the initial interviewees were contacted through personal ties, most of them responded to announcements of ongoing research about drugs and tourism. These ads were publicized in various sites in the Internet, including Web sites promoting drug-oriented parties (www.ataf.co.il, www.police.co.il, and www.iol.co.il), travel Web sites (www.lametayel.co.il), and student Web sites (www.bgu.co.il). Additional ads were publicized on billboards located at various Israeli university campuses and at travel supply stores in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Special attention was given to both ethical issues and the need to gain the trust of the interviewees in light of the sensitivity of the investigated topic. Accordingly, each of the interviewees had a preinterview meeting with one of the researchers, in which the interviewee was informed about the (academic) purposes of the research and confidentiality regarding the identity of the interviewee was promised.

Although the interviewer revealed his familiarity with destinations, expressions, and terms that are common among drug-taking tourists, he refrained from both providing information about his own involvement with the investigated phenomenon and from passing moral judgment. All of the in-depth interviews were conducted in places that were chosen by the interviewees, mostly at their homes. The interviews lasted from 2 to 3 hours, with most closer to the upper limit. The respondents were asked to speak unreservedly about their experiences with drugs in everyday life and in the context of tourism. Specifically, the interviewees were encouraged to talk in length about a variety of issues, including information about the locations and events in which they consumed drugs during their trips, their travel motivations, the meanings they assign to their experiences, the patterns of their drug acquisition and usage, their fears and worries, and their precaution practices. The interviews were also a source for secondary data that were gathered through the Internet. Specifically, some of the interviewees informed the interviewer about Web sites in which relevant information, such as locations and events of drug tourism, or warnings regarding travel and drug usage, is publicized (www.kohpangan.com, www.hqamsterdam.com, www.erowid.org, www.rustlers.co.za, www.antidrugs.gov.il, www.interpol.net, and www.araft.co.il). All of the in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The conclusions of this article are also based on observations and informal interviews. Fieldwork observations were carried out by one of the authors of this article at drug tourism sites and events in various locations, including Israel, Egypt, Europe, and India. Specifically, observational data were gathered from a "full-moon" party that took place at Kassol, India; a 2-day stay at a guesthouse in Amsterdam known to be a meeting place for drug tourists; a 4-day stay at Bir Sware beach in Sinai, Egypt, where marijuana and hash are intensively consumed; and an overnight drug cruise party from Israel to Cyprus and back. In addition, a total of 19 informal interviews were carried out with local drug dealers, law enforcement agents, organizers of rave parties around the world, and drug tourists who were approached mainly during observations. Field notes were written during and immediately after observations and informal interviews. In this way, the present study complies with the technique of data triangulation (Denzin 1978; Decrop 1999), which aims to advance the credibility of qualitative research. Because the formal interviews provided the best examples and quotes, only one of the quotations presented below derives from the informal interviews. Yet the data gathered from the observations and informal interviews were important in examining and validating the conclusions of this study. In addition, it should be noted that the findings from the informal interviews and observations corresponded with the findings from the formal interviews. Note that the usage of a variety of data sources, including the in-depth interviews, the informal interviews, the observations, and the secondary data mentioned above, is another way of achieving data triangulation (Denzin 1978; Decrop 1999).

The gathered data were rewritten into a Word file for the purposes of interpretative analysis, as commonly used in ethnographic studies that are mainly based on in-depth interviews (Fontana and Frey 1994; Riessman 1993; Seidman 1991). The premise of the interpretive analysis is that the interviewees' accounts reflect the subjective perceptions of

their experiences rather than an “objective reality” of the examined phenomenon. In line with this methodological approach, the most common features of the interviewees’ accounts were delineated and interpreted according to the researchers’ understanding. To reduce the chance of systematic bias, the interviewees’ accounts were first analyzed separately by each of the authors and then jointly discussed. Note that this procedure complies with Denzin’s notion of investigator triangulation (1978). This interpretative analysis generates a metanarrative, which aims to provide insight about the investigated phenomenon. The empirical quality of such an analysis concerns its ability to provide authentic metanarrative and convincing explanations that tie the interviewees’ personal accounts with the theory applied in the study. In the context of the theoretical device applied in this study, the interpretive analysis attempted to classify each interviewee into one of Cohen’s modes presented above, according to her or his travel motivations and the meanings that she or he assigned to both routine living in the home environment and the drug-related tourist experience. This analysis was based on the interviewees’ own statements, which were not always consistent throughout the interview. In such cases of ambiguity, the decision regarding which of the six modes the interviewee corresponds with was based on both researchers’ impressions from the interview as a whole.

Another matter of concern in the present study is the reliance on a single typology rather than on multiple typologies for the data interpretation. In this regard, it is suggested that Cohen’s perspective (1979) is most suitable for the current study, which examines the experiences of drug tourists. Specifically, note that whereas most of the typologies in tourism studies focus on tourist motivations (e.g., Gray 1970; Krippendorf 1987; Lee and Crompton 1992; Pearce 1982; Plog 1973) or the tourist role (e.g., Cohen 1972, 1974; Wickens 2002), Cohen’s typology (1979) is explicitly concerned with the issue of tourist experiences. Moreover, this typology appears to present the most comprehensive analytical device for sensitizing social scientists to the variety of tourist experiences because it takes into account both the tourists’ attitudes toward their own culture and routine living, and the motivations and meaning they assign to the travel practices.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are presented below with an attempt to capture both the classification of the interviewees into Cohen’s modes of experiences and the additional themes that emerged from the data. With regard to the former attempt, the findings indicate that the drug-related tourist experience is heterogeneous in nature and might comply with each of the six modes presented above. This diversity is presented below in the following subsections: (1) pleasure-oriented experiences that include the recreational and diversionary modes, and (2) meaningful experiences that include the experiential, experimental, existential, and humanistic modes. In terms of the themes that emerge from the data, the findings point toward three different types of cultural centers that attract drug tourists searching for meaningful

experiences. Accordingly, these cultural centers are presented within the latter subsection of the findings.

Pleasure-Oriented Experiences

The experiences of 20 interviewees (two-thirds of the in-depth interview sample) seem to comply with Cohen’s two modes of pleasure-oriented experiences. Specifically, whereas 13 of these pleasure seekers conform to the recreational mode, the other seven correspond to the diversionary mode of tourist experiences. In terms of travel motivations, the experiences of these drug tourists involved the pursuit of mere pleasure without a quest for meaningful experiences or a particular interest in the other’s center. For example, an Israeli interviewee who took a short-term vacation on the Thai island of Koh Phangan suggested the following:

I arrived in Koh Phangan to take part in the full-moon party and to consume as large a variety of drugs as possible. . . . I was not interested in the Thai culture at all and had no intentions to visit other parts of this country. I came to have fun . . . to loosen up and to take a short break from the ordinary stress at home. Not everybody who travels in the East follows the guidelines of *National Geographic*.

As noted above, the experiences of most of these pleasure seekers did not involve an alienation from their everyday life routine or their own culture and, thus, were classified as recreational. The notion of the drug-related tourist experience as recreational rather than diversionary was well exemplified through the following statements of a German student who spends his vacations in Ibiza, Spain:

Ibiza is my preferred destination for the annual vacation. It is popular among young Europeans who like drugs and house music. . . . I do it for pure fun. You cannot compare me with those homeless Punk-bums from Berlin. I have a job and I am about to complete my studies at the university.

Unlike the interviewee above, the experiences of seven of the fun-seeking interviewees were classified as diversionary in accordance with their estrangement from their routine living and their own culture. The nature of the diversionary drug-related tourist experience was illustrated by a Swiss tourist who visits Amsterdam several times a year:

I work in a bank, earn good money, but I hate my job and the kind of life that I have. So I escape from it by traveling to Amsterdam several times a year, where I smoke myself to death and waste a lot of money. For me it is a way to forget my boring life in Geneva and to justify the fact that I am still working in that bank for the money.

The interviews with the pleasure-seeking drug tourists also revealed that most of them tended to use drugs before their journey as part of their ordinary leisure activities. The expressions quoted above, such as “smoke myself to death” or “consume as large a variety of drugs as possible,” illustrate the tendency of these drug tourists to intensify their

drug usage during their vacation. This inclination to do “more of the same” in the shift from leisure to tourist experiences was illustrated by an interviewee who participated in a 48-hour cruise party from Israel to Cyprus and back:

I am a frequent partygoer who may consume a few (Ecstasy) wheels on a wild night. However, when that ship left the harbor, it felt like a real vacation where you can also cross your own limits. I took 14 wheels during these 48 hours!!! The people who were on that ship were totally wiped out. Cyprus was out there for everybody, but nobody left the ship.

Meaningful Experiences

The findings indicate that drug-related tourist experiences are not necessarily fun-oriented but might involve a quest for meanings as well. In this context, the experiences of 10 interviewees (one-third of the sample) appear to comply with the four modes that involve a quest for meaningful experiences by an engagement in other cultures while traveling. Among these interviewees, one seems to comply with the existential mode, four with the experimental mode, one with the experiential mode, and four with the humanistic mode. The latter appear to seek experiential-like meaningful experiences without being alienated from their own culture.

Although all of these drug tourists search for meaning in the centers of other cultures, they differ in terms of their estrangement from their own culture and the degree of their engagement in these cultures. In addition, these drug tourists differ in terms of the cultural centers in which they choose to become involved. In this regard, the findings point toward three different types of cultural centers: (1) the local culture associated with the visited destination; (2) subcultures that emerge around particular drugs, such as cannabis or peyote; and (3) alternative subcultures, such as rave and New Age, which involve an extensive usage of various drugs, among other practices. The findings presented below suggest that compared to the first center, which is place-bound, the latter two are less territorialized in nature.

Local cultures. The first type of center includes the goals and values that the drug tourists identify as authentic aspects of the local culture in the visited destination. In this respect, the usage of drugs while traveling is part of the tourist attempt to experience aspects of the local culture. For example, a Dutch tourist who tried the hallucinogenic cactus called San Pedro while traveling in Peru referred to his experience as follows:

For me, it was part of the South American experience . . . an authentic experience, just like visiting the Carnival in Brazil, climbing the Machu Picchu, and eating chili con carne in the streets. . . . The San Pedro ceremony provides a profound and ultimate experience for exploring the local Indian culture in Peru and Ecuador. This is not a passive way of exploring the local culture like reading the traveler’s *Handbook* or visiting a museum.

A similar notion of a drug as a marker of the local culture was expressed by an Israeli interviewee who tried opium in the Sinai desert as part of her quest for an authentic Bedouin experience:

Initially, I had no intention to smoke opium, since I do not use drugs at all. We just wanted to travel in the desert as the Bedouins do and to see the opium fields as part of the attraction offered there. However, the Bedouin guide that we had smoked it all day long and told us that it is the Bedouin way to overcome the heat and to stay calm. My friend suggested that “in Rome we should act as Romans.” At night we asked our guide if we could try it, and he prepared a cigarette with opium, which we smoked, and cooked sweet opium tea, which we drank. I was a bit nervous, but mainly excited. . . . This was a real Bedouin experience . . . not the usual pita bread with “labaneh” cheese that you can get anywhere.

Drug subcultures. The second type of center that attracts drug tourists includes subcultures that emerge around particular drugs, such as cannabis or peyote. For instance, users of hash and marijuana may share certain goals, values, practices, and lifestyles that constitute a distinctive subculture within and across national cultures. Tourists who wish to engage to a certain degree in such drug-related subcultures may visit destinations that they associate with these drug subcultures. Unlike the first type of centers, where the drug serves as a marker of the local culture in the visited destination, the second type of center involves destinations that serve as markers of the drug-related subculture to be engaged in. For example, a tourist from New Zealand who was informally interviewed in one of Amsterdam’s coffee shops stated the following:

Amsterdam is a “must” place for pot smokers . . . the coffee shops, the smart and the home-grow shops, the Cannabis Cup competition. Anybody that loves pot should arrive to Amsterdam at least once in his life. Similar to the wish of every Jew to be in Jerusalem, every pot smoker wants to be in Amsterdam, which is the world capital of cannabis.

Another example of a tourist seeking meaningful experience in such drug-oriented centers was provided by a French interviewee who travels frequently to various destinations (including five excursions to Mexico) as part of her existential involvement with peyote-related gatherings. The role that such subcultures may play in an individual’s quest for self-actualization is well illustrated in her following account:

The first time I used peyote was the most significant experience I ever had. I cannot imagine my present life without peyote. My mother is American; my father is from Quebec, and we were always “on the move” from one country to another. I am not connected to any culture, language, or identity. My involvement with peyote, including the gatherings, the rituals, and the actual usage of it, is kind of an anchor that stabilizes my life and illuminates the deepest part of my existence.

Alternative subcultures. The third type of center that attracts drug tourists includes alternative subcultures, such as rave and New Age, which involve the usage of various drugs, among other practices. Similar to the subcultures that emerge around particular drugs, the cultural movements of rave and New Age emerge within and across national cultures, and the

destinations in which they are approached by drug tourists are not place-bound in nature. The rise of these subcultures in advanced industrialized societies corresponds to Featherstone's prognosis regarding the declining role of territory in the era of globalization (1996). Specifically, Featherstone (1996) argued that globalization processes lessen the importance of territory as a factor of cultural distinctions and, thus, foster the rise of "de-territorialized" cultures.

The notion of a deterritorialized culture is mostly evident in the context of the rave subculture, which emphasizes the values of geographical detachment and temporariness as major elements of its counterculture ideology (Bey 1985, 1994). Accordingly, rave-related gatherings, which involve dancing to the electronic sounds of "trance" music in natural settings combined with the usage of various drugs, including LSD, amphetamines, and Ecstasy, are hosted by various destinations across different natural settings, climate, and countries. Major rave-related events, such as the Boom festival in Portugal, the Woof festival in Germany, the Lowland festival in Holland, the trance-music parties in Ibiza, and the full-moon parties in Koh Phangan, are publicized through the Internet and marketed by travel agencies, which offer packages that include transportation, accommodation, and entry tickets to these events. The world-famous full-moon parties, which took place at the beaches of Goa, India, during the late 1980s and at the beaches of Koh Phangan, Thailand, during the 1990s, appear to be the most popular events associated with the rave subculture. The popularity of these parties is illustrated by the arrival of 3,000 international partygoers to one of the full-moon parties that occurred in 1994 at Haad Rin beach in Koh Phangan (Westerhausen 2002). Although some of the interviewees in the current study arrived at the full-moon parties in Koh Phangan as part of their long-term trip in Southeast Asia, others were short-term travelers who purchased a 1- or 2-week package deal particularly for this event. The latter belong to an emerging segment in the tourism market, which was recently referred to by Sorensen (2003) as a short-term backpacking form of travel.

Clearly, the rave-related events described above attract drug tourists of all kinds, including pleasure seekers and those who search for meaningful experiences by engaging in the rave subculture. An example of the latter was evident in the following accounts of an Israeli interviewee, whose experiences on the beaches of Goa seem to comply with the experimental mode of tourist experiences:

A: Rave is the mainstream thing for young people of my age, and if you are not connected to it you have a real problem. I wanted to try the real thing, so I traveled to Goa, which is known as the world capital of full-moon parties and drugs.

Q: What is exactly this "thing" that you wanted to try?

A: You know . . . the parties, the trance and house music, being out there in the nature, the slang that people use, and, of course, the drugs, which are an inseparable part of this culture. I know that it sounds superficial, but it's a real culture . . . it guides you in how to feel free, without any limitations.

Q: Do you identify yourself as a raver?

A: I was then but not today. I still might go to a party once in a while or even take a package deal to Ibiza, but it is not a major component of my present life anymore.

The notion of full-moon parties as a manifestation of a subculture was also illustrated in the accounts of another Israeli interviewee who appeared to seek an experiential experience on her visit to Koh Phangan:

I wanted to see what this full-moon party is, and the culture that surrounds it, although I am not really connected to the music and certainly not to the drugs. . . . It was out of curiosity.

Q: You call it a culture. Do you really think that it is a culture?

A: Whatever you say . . . culture, subculture. . . . What is it, "Sociology 101"? . . . But seriously, there are rituals, codes of behavior, and values that all the partygoers in Koh Phangan know about, although they are not written on any sign. Many of these partygoers are heavy followers of this drug and party culture and consume it also at home.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the phenomenon of drug usage while traveling in the context of the wide literature regarding the nature of tourist experiences. The first step of the current analysis was to define the phenomenon of drug tourism in terms of the substances labeled as drugs, the persons regarded as drug tourists, and the locations referred to as drug tourism sites. In this regard, the current study challenged the inclination to reduce the definition of drug tourism only to the tourist's main motivation to arrive at a specific destination for the purpose of drug consumption (Valdez and Sifaneck 1997), because such a definition excludes various manifestations of drug usage in the context of tourism. Instead, the definition of drug tourism suggested in this study also includes tourists who refer to their drug taking merely as a byproduct of their travel experience and tourists who become aware of the accessibility of drugs only during their stay in a particular destination. Such an approach, which takes into account the multipurpose and multiactivity nature of tourism (e.g., Oppermann 1999; Ryan 1998), seems to be appropriate also with respect to other types of tourism, such as wine tourism, sport tourism, farm tourism, and so forth.

Beyond the conceptual definition of drug tourism, the study's main concern was to question the nature of drug-related tourist experiences by using a recent version of Cohen's phenomenological typology of tourist experiences (Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai 2002) as an analytical instrument. In this regard, the empirical analysis yielded that drug-related tourist experiences are heterogeneous in nature and might involve either the pursuit of mere pleasure or a quest for profound and meaningful experiences. Accordingly, this research validates both previous indications that drug taking in the context of tourism might be associated with a quest for meaningful experiences (de Rios 1994) and studies that relate the phenomenon of drug tourism with the pursuit of mere pleasure (Bellis et al. 2000; Josiam et al. 1998; Sellars 1998). With respect to the latter, the findings suggest that the drug-related tourist experience of the pleasure-seeking drug tourists could be seen as an intensified extension of their everyday-life leisure activities. Note that the inclination of these drug tourists to do "more of the same" while traveling

is also congruent with previous studies about pleasure-seeking drug tourists (Bellis et al. 2000; Josiam et al. 1998; Sellars 1998). This finding also contributes to the discussion about the nature of the relationships between the domains of leisure and tourism in general. Specifically, it supports the view that hedonistic tourist behavior is closely related to residual cultures that shape leisure behavior in the home environment rather than being triggered by a discrete tourist culture (Carr 2002; Clark and Clift 1994). From an academic perspective, this perception suggests that pleasure-oriented tourism and leisure behavior should not be considered as separate fields of study and that concepts or theories developed in leisure studies can be used to understand hedonistic tourist behavior and vice versa. In terms of practical applications, the notion of a continuum across leisure and pleasure-oriented tourism behavior suggests that methods developed to assess and minimize the negative impacts of drug usage in the routine of everyday life may also be used in the context of drug tourism. Such an approach is illustrated in recent activities of the Israeli Antidrug Authority (IAA) that include posting information regarding the hazards associated with various drugs in tourist agencies and travel supply stores and the establishment of an information and aid center designated for Israeli backpackers in Manali, India.

The findings of this study also place doubt on the implicit inclination to tie the marginal phenomenon of drug tourism with a quest to escape the boredom of routine life or with an estrangement from the mainstream culture of the home society (de Rios 1994). In this regard, note that only a minority of the interviewees (13 out of 30) seemed to comply with modes of experiences that involve the tourist's quest for escape (7 diversionary, 1 experiential, 4 experimental, and 1 existential). The 4 interviewees who complied with the humanistic mode of tourist experiences and the 13 recreational-like interviewees indicate that both drug tourists who search for meaningful experiences and those who are pleasure oriented are not necessarily estranged from their own culture. The latter seem to support Sellars's argument (1998) that the phenomenon of drug usage among youth should be better understood in terms of a quest for cheerfulness rather than as a sort of escape from reality. This perspective, which addresses the usage of drugs as a "normal" societal phenomenon rather than as "problematic behavior" to be overcome, appears to develop in the most current research about drug culture. For example, van Ree (2002) suggested that, similar to the phenomenon of homosexuality, the usage of drugs should not be addressed as a disease to be treated but as social phenomena to be investigated by theoretical frameworks that are used for the understanding of normal phenomena as well. Accordingly, van Ree (2002) linked the wide usage of drugs in modern Western societies to both the "civilizing process," in which growing permission is given to "controlled de-control" behaviors, and the preference of the consumer society for "dream like" and "wasteful" oriented sorts of experiences. Note that both the "civilizing process" theory (Elias 1994) and the "consumer society" concept are well-established sociological frameworks, which are widely implemented to grasp other cultural pursuits accepted as normal. In this respect, the present study's usage of Cohen's typology of tourist experiences to examine the specific phenomenon of drug tourism is congruent with current developments in the research about drug taking in general.

By distinguishing among three types of cultural centers that attract drug tourists, this study also provides additional insight into Cohen's phenomenology of tourist experiences (1979), which ignores the nature of the spiritual centers that tourists become involved with. The first center identified in the analysis concerns the goals and values that the drug tourist identifies as authentic aspects of the local culture in the visited destination. Thus, tourists who consume drugs as part of their attempt to engage in this cultural center illustrate a particular version of the common quest for authenticity in tourism (MacCannell 1973). The two other centers that attract drug tourists include subcultures that emerge around particular drugs and alternative subcultures, such as rave and New Age, which flourish in contemporary Western societies and involve an extensive usage of various drugs. Compared to the first center, which is place-bound, the second and mainly the third type of centers are much less territorialized in nature. Accordingly, the experiences of drug tourists who engage in these centers illustrate an interesting version of a trend toward the "displacement" of experiences in contemporary tourism (Cohen 1995). In this context, note that although Cohen (1995) related this trend to the proliferation of simulated attractions in the postmodern era, this study relates it to the emergence of deterritorialized cultures in the era of globalization (Featherstone 1996). Moreover, Cohen (1995) perceived the progressive disappearance of place-bound attractions as a threat to contemporary and future tourism. Specifically, he asked, "If any experience could be virtually had in any location, no experience will be place-bound any more; then why should people travel?" (Cohen 1995, p. 20). In contrast, the findings of this study suggest that the emergence of deterritorialized cultural centers might generate (drug-oriented) tourists rather than threaten the tourism industry.

This study might also provide researchers and practitioners with directions for future research. For example, note that although the behavior of pleasure-seeking drug tourists was presented in this study as an intensified continuation of their leisure routines, the impact of their drug-related tourist experiences on their drug consumption patterns subsequent to the trip was not addressed. Thus, future studies about marginal tourist behaviors in general, and the phenomenon of drug tourism in particular, are encouraged to examine the possible impact of tourist-related experiences on the routine of everyday life. Another possible continuation of this study concerns its contribution to the research area of tourist experiences. In this respect, the distinctions made between the types of cultural centers that attract tourists require further research and conceptualization. Studies in this direction should focus on the emergence of deterritorialized cultures in the context of the trend toward the displacement of tourist experiences in the era of globalization. Finally, note that in the research area of drug tourism, other issues beyond the nature of the tourist experience ought to be further investigated, such as the risk perception of drug-taking tourists, existing policies of local authorities, resident attitudes toward the development of drug tourism destinations, law enforcement practices against drug tourists, and the impact of drug tourism on local populations.

REFERENCES

- Bellis, M. A., G. Hale, A. Bennett, M. Chaudry, and M. Kilfoyle (2000). "Ibiza Uncovered: Changes in Substance Use and Sexual Behaviour amongst Young People Visiting an International Night-Life Resort." *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 11 (3): 235-44.
- Bey, H. (1985). *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. London: Autonomedia.
- (1994). *Immediatism*. London: AK Press.
- Carr, N. (2002). "The Tourism-Leisure Behavioural Continuum." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (4): 972-86.
- Clark, N., and S. Clift (1994). "A Survey of Student Health and Risk Behavior on Holidays Abroad." Travel, Lifestyles and Health Working Paper no. 3. Center for Health Education and Research and Center for Tourism Studies, Christ Church College, Canterbury, UK.
- Cohen, E. (1972). "Toward a Sociology of International Tourism." *Social Research*, 39 (1): 164-82.
- (1973). "Nomads from Affluence: Notes on the Phenomenon of Drifter-Tourism." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 14 (1/2): 89-103.
- (1974). "Who Is a Tourist? A Conceptual Clarification." *Sociological Review*, 22: 527-55.
- (1979). "A Phenomenology of Tourist Experience." *Sociology*, 2: 180-201.
- (1982). "Thai Girls and Farnag Men: The Edge of Ambiguity." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 9: 403-28.
- (1995). "Contemporary Tourism—Trends and Challenges: Sustainable Authenticity or Contrived Post-Modernity?" In *Change in Tourism: People, Places, Processes*, edited by R. Butler and D. Pearce. London: Routledge, pp. 12-29.
- Decrop, A. (1999). "Triangulation in Qualitative Tourism Research." *Tourism Management*, 20: 157-61.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- de Rios, M. D. (1994). "Drug Tourism in the Amazon: Why Westerners Are Desperate to Find the Vanishing Primate." *Omni*, 16 (4): 6-9.
- Eldridge, W. G. (1971). *Narcotics and the Law*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Eliade, M. (1969). *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Elias, N. (1994). *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Elsrud, T. (2001). "Risk Creation in Traveling: Backpacker Adventure Narration." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28: 597-617.
- Featherstone, M. (1996). "Localism, Globalism, and Culture Identity." In *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, edited by R. Wilson and W. Dissanayake. London: Duke University Press, pp. 46-77.
- Fischer, R. (1993). "Why and How Did Mystical Rapture Become Extinct? The Story of Its Glory and Postmodern Demise." *Social Neuroscience Bulletin*, 6 (3): 38-39.
- Fontana, A., and H. J. Frey (1994). "Interviewing: The Art of Science." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. Denzin and S. Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 361-76.
- Gay, J. (1985). "The Patriotic Prostitute." *Progressive*, 49 (3): 34.
- Gray, H. P. (1970). *International Travel-International Trade*. London: Heath Lexington.
- Hall, C. M. (2002). "Gender and Economic Interests in Tourism Prostitution: The Nature, Development and Implication of Sex Tourism in South East Asia." In *The Sociology of Tourism: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Y. Apostolopoulos, S. Leiadi, and A. Yiannakis. London: Routledge, pp. 265-80.
- Herold, E., R. Garcia, and T. DeMoya (2001). "Female Tourists and Beach Boys: Romance or Sex Tourism?" *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28 (4): 978-97.
- Hunter-Jones, P. (2004). "Young People, Holiday-Taking and Cancer: An Exploratory Analysis." *Tourism Management*, 25: 249-58.
- Hyde, K. F., and R. Lawson (2003). "The Nature of Independent Travel." *Journal of Travel Research*, 42: 13-23.
- Josiam, M. B., J. S. P. Hobson, U. C. Dietrich, and G. Smeaton (1998). "An Analysis of the Sexual, Alcohol and Drug Related Behavioral Patterns of Students on Spring Break." *Tourism Management*, 19 (6): 501-13.
- Korf, D. J. (1995). *Dutch Treat: Formal Control and Illicit Drug Use in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Thela Thesis.
- (2002). "Dutch Coffee Shops and Trends in Cannabis Use." *Addictive Behaviors*, 27 (6): 851-66.
- Krippendorff, J. (1987). *The Holiday Makers: Understanding the Impact of Leisure and Travel*. Oxford: Heinemann Professional.
- Lee, T., and J. L. Crompton (1992). "Measuring Novelty Seeking in Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19: 732-51.
- MacCannell, D. (1973). "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings." *American Sociological Review*, 79: 589-603.
- O'Connell, D. J. (1996). "Sex Tourism in Cuba." *Race & Class*, 38 (1): 39-48.
- Oppermann, M. (1999). "Sex Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26 (2): 251-66.
- Pearce, P. (1982). *The Social Psychology of Tourist Behavior*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Plog, S. C. (1973). "Why Destination Areas Rise and Fall in Popularity." *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, (November): 13-16.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ryan, C. (1993). "Tourism and Crime: An Intrinsic or Accidental Relationship?" *Tourism Management*, 14 (3): 173-83.
- (1998). "Sex Tourism Paradigms of Confusion." In *Tourism, Travel and Sex*, edited by S. Clift and S. Carter. London: Cassell.
- Ryan, C., and C. M. Hall (2001). *Sex Tourism: Marginal People and Liminalities*. London: Routledge.
- Ryan, C., and R. Kinder (1996). "The Deviant Tourist and the Crimogenic Place." In *Tourism Crime and International Security Issues*, edited by A. Pizam and Y. Mansfeld. Chichester, UK: Wiley, pp. 23-35.
- Seidman, I. E. (1991). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Sellars, A. (1998). "The Influence of Dance Music on the UK Youth Tourism Market." *Tourism Management*, 19 (6): 611-15.
- Shils, E. (1975). "Center and Periphery." In *Center and Periphery: Essays in Sociology*, edited by E. Shils. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 3-16.
- Sorensen, A. (2003). "Backpacker Ethnography." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30 (4): 847-86.
- Turner, V. (1973). "The Center Out There: Pilgrim's Goal." *History of Religion*, 12 (3): 191-230.
- Uriely, N., Y. Yonay, and D. Simchai (2002). "Backpacking Experiences: A Type and Form Analysis." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (4): 520-38.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage.
- Valdez, A., and S. J. Sifaneck (1997). "Drug Tourists and Drug Policy on the U.S.-Mexican Border: An Ethnographic Investigation." *Journal of Drug Issues*, 27 (4): 879-98.
- van den Brink, W. (1996). "Heroin in Amsterdam." *Jellinek Quarterly*, 3 (4): 6-7.
- Van Ree, E. (2002). "Drugs, the Democratic Civilising Process and the Consumer Society." *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 13: 349-53.
- Westerhausen, K. (2002). *Beyond the Beach: An Ethnography of Modern Travelers in Asia*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- Wickens, E. (1997). "Licensed for Thrill: Risk-Taking and Tourism." In *Tourism and Health*, edited by S. Clift and P. Gabowski. London: Printer, pp. 151-64.
- (2002). "The Sacred and the Profane: A Tourist Typology." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (3): 834-51.