

The multidimensional realities of mediatized places: The transformative role of tour guides

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Abstract:

Tour guides can transform tourist experiences. This is particularly evident in TV-series themed tours where tourists' expectations are more likely to be met if a guide leads them into different dimensions of space and time. Here, we develop a *model of the multidimensional realities of mediatized places* by applying grounded theory, capturing how the transformative role of tour guides is key to the creation of memorable experiences. We illustrate how guides choreograph the shifts between multidimensional realities (past, present, fantasy world). Finally, we show that this switching between multidimensional realities has significant implications, specifically resulting in greater tourist involvement and in experiences that are remembered as having been beyond expectations. Our findings reveal the importance of detailed knowledge - of both the relevant fiction and local history - in crafting memorable experiences; highlights the skills required to build trust among participants, and discusses the devices used to cross the boundaries between multidimensional realities.

Keywords: guided tours, netnography, grounded theory, memorable experiences, TripAdvisor, Game of Thrones, TV series.

Introduction

Our digital social environment has led to the emergence of numerous dynamic challenges for tourism service providers because tourists have the devices necessary to produce, consume and market their own experiences (Munar, 2011; Sigala & Gretzel, 2018). Thus, tour guides, to preserve their *raison d'être* – to guide individuals, like modern Virgils, with wisdom and knowledge while protecting and supporting them through the temporal changes intrinsic to the journey – can be understood as catalysts in the creation of tourist experiences (Ap & Wong, 2001; Cohen, 1985). Poetry, novels, music, videogames and films offer ‘a rabbit hole’ through which to cross the boundaries between everyday reality and an imagined world (Beeton, 2016; Reijnders, 2016; Hoppen, Brown & Fyall, 2014).

This paper is positioned within the theoretical field of mediatized tourism (Beeton, 2016; Connell, 2012; Lundberg, Ziakas & Morgan 2018). It is contextualised in one of the filming locations of a highly popular fantasy drama, *Game of Thrones*, and contributes to the field by investigating how the consumption of tourism spaces is orchestrated by tour guides. Through mediatization, in films and TV-series, tourism destinations gain new symbolic meanings and become mediatized places (O'Connor & Kim, 2014; Volo & Irimiás, 2016). Tour guides must be able to decode these meanings. Research on tour guides' performative work suggests that their knowledge, and interpretation of attractions and place meanings are crucial to the designing and realising of memorable tours (Ap & Wong, 2001; Rátz, 2017).

For tourists, sharing, narrating and commenting on their visits to Kings' Landing/ Dubrovnik with a global and virtual audience add value to their experience. Our unit of analysis is the Game of Thrones Dubrovnik Tour (GOTDT) offered by the Doria Ltd Dubrovnik Travel Agency in Dubrovnik (Croatia) - TripAdvisor's top GOT tour and the third most popular tour in the city. Although it is not an official HBO GOT tour, all its guides were involved as extras (people who worked on the set) in the TV series. The (3km c. 2.5 hour) standardised tour called the 'King's Landing Extended Tour' enables small groups of participants to discover the Old City and the seven filming locations within it (www.game-of-thrones-dubrovnik-tour.com). The multidimensional realities given to participants are an important aspect of the GOTDT because the screen-tour of the city maps a fantasy-world onto a sensitive heritage location struggling with 'over-tourism' (Tkalec, Zilic & Recher, 2017). Tourists' online narratives contribute to shaping diverse ways in which the historical heritage city overlaps with the city as both filming location and leisure space. Themed tour experiences are far from being limited in space and time: participants are encouraged to explore different realities of mediatized place, woven through the warp and weft of screened, on-site and online participatory mechanisms.

This article investigates (1) the transformative role of tour guides through tourists' recollections of and comments on GOTDT experiences, and (2) how the multidimensional realities of mediatized Dubrovnik overlap. We define the different layers of place and time meaning attributed to the destination as multidimensional realities of place. Research questions investigate:

1. how does detailed knowledge of the relevant fiction and of local history enable the crafting of memorable experiences?
2. what skills are required to build trust among participants?
3. what tools are deemed necessary to cross the boundaries between the multidimensional realities of mediatized places?

Literature review

As Reijnders (2010) argued in his analysis on TV detective tours, physical places such as specific filming locations are metaphorical places and evoke emotionally significant experiences linked to a fictional reality. Reijnders' (2010) concept of *lieux d'imagination* (places of imagination) builds on Pierre Nora's (1989) studies on *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory). Nora (1989) considered *lieux* as material, symbolic and functional arguing that any material site becomes a *lieux* when imagination invests the place with symbolic meaning. Thus, tangible and intangible attributes of a place, the physical environment and its social and cultural meanings, are at the base of the 'sense of place' (Tuan, 1977). The construction of a sense of place is reinforced by travel to filming locations and the discovery of the different intertwining realities of place narratives (Gyimóthy, 2018; Couldry, 2000). Exploring Bollywood-induced tourism performances, Gyimóthy (2018) evidenced that place meanings are constantly reconfigured and new tourism practices created a nonwestern sense of place of Swiss Alpine destinations. In fact, when exploring the relationship between television series and tourism, as Kim and Long (2012) have argued, the distinctive way in which the former influence audience experiences must be kept in mind. Fiction can provoke in viewers a sense of anticipation regarding the filming location as a tourism destination (Sampaio, 2014). Higher levels of audience commitment and 'deeper audience emotional engagement' (Kim & Long, 2012:175) not only increase TV series viewers' interest in visiting the shooting locations but also raise their expectations about both the destination and any themed services provided (Irimiás, Michalkó, Timothy & Franch, 2017). This attachment on the part of tourists to the geographical locations of fictional reality has two effects. On the demand side, it encourages travel to filming sites; while on the supply side it shapes services (Beeton, 2016; Lundberg, Ziakas & Morgan, 2018). Viewers consuming mediatized places on-screen are transported into a spectacle. Once on location, the quest to identify the overlaps between their mindscape and the destination narratives begins (Tzanelli & Yar, 2016; Im & Chon, 2008). Some tourists choose to visit a particular place primarily because it was a television drama location (Busby & Haines, 2013; Mitev, Irimiás, Michalkó & Franch, 2017), for others, this fact simply adds value to on-site experiences as a secondary or tertiary attraction (Oviedo-García, Castellanos-Verdugo, Trujillo-García & Mallya, 2016).

Bastiaansen et al. (2018) claimed that a tourist's experience becomes memorable if their cognitive and emotional interpretations of multidimensional realities are stimulated. On the other hand, the fact that

participants have expended physical and cognitive energy on a tour also contributes to making the experience memorable, increasing attention levels and encouraging participants to be mentally present in the experience, this attentive presence subsequently enables content to be more readily activated in memory (Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Participation and involvement in activities, the co-creation of experiences, require intense attention, thus leading to more memorable experiences (Rátz, 2017). Experiences are co-created on different levels during service encounters (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2018). As Tussyadiah (2014) evidenced experience design in tourism should be centred on the tourists' perspective considering the media triggers -among others- associated with the destination. Screen tourists can create experience alone, but social interactions with other tourists and especially with the person who designs and realises the tour add value to the tour (Pabel & Pearce, 2018). The ability of service providers to facilitate tourists' quests - providing stimuli and platforms for the decoding of the different dimensions of a mediated place, is fundamental to the designing of memorable tourist experiences (Gelbman & Collins-Kreiner, 2018).

Method

Netnography was used to explore GOTDT tourists' online narratives (Kozinets, 2012; Volo 2012; Wu & Pearce, 2014). Netnography is a humanistic online ethnographical method for seeking knowledge on an algorithm-driven platform (Kozinets, Scaraboto & Parmentier, 2018), it adapts the 'observation of textual discourse' (Kozinets, 2002:64) to the analysis of social media content, digging for 'contextually nuanced data' (Reid & Duffy, 2018:263). A quick Google search using the term 'Game of Thrones tours' produced 88500 results. TripAdvisor data shows that the annual search activity for GOT locations has grown exponentially, some locations experienced a 2270% increase in traveller interest between 2016 and 2019. TripAdvisor is advertising a constant stream of new services, such as bookable experiences and tours that offer an interactive platform for user-generated content about tourism businesses; it also ranks the most frequently booked tours on its site (Yoo, Sigala & Ulrike, 2016). This rapidly increasing interest in GOT filming locations justifies the selection of Dubrovnik as a unit of analysis.

Data gathering: Data was gathered from the TripAdvisor website (www.tripadvisor.com) in October 2016. Tourists' online narratives about GOTDT were identified, copied, numbered and organised for netnography. Only comments written in English were collected. The sample selection criterion was based on timeframe rather than review length. May to September 2016 is justified as the timeframe because the sixth season of GOT was aired in 2016: fans were deeply involved in the plot and were keen to visit the filming locations. We explicitly selected this period of analysis before GOT's popularity

diminished, or any disappointment linked to the ending of the series influenced GOT tourists' opinions and perceptions.

The study is based on a total of 260 reviews. The TripAdvisor reviewers' (100 male, 120 female, 40 unknown) socio-demographic characteristics could not be identified with any precision because reviewers are not obliged to provide any information on gender, age, marital status, or country/city of residence. Although several reviews included paratextual elements such as photos, these were not analysed since we believe that narratives are richer than images, especially because the photos shared on TripAdvisor lack any comment or interpretation. Only in their narratives were the GOTDT tourists' expectations and perceptions about the tour guides' transformative role (the focus of this study) expressed. The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Mendeley.

Data analysis and interpretation: A grounded theory approach was used to identify the bases of the GOTDT tourists' memorable experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Glaser and Strauss (1967) conceptualised grounded theory as an inductive, qualitative research method by which to investigate data quality and depth. Matteucci and Gnoth (2017:53) argued that this method "involves continuous iteration between data collection and analysis, and is deemed complete once theoretical saturation has been reached".

The reviews were coded using a data reduction process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The coding procedure had three distinctive steps: (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding. In the interpretative process of open coding, data were broken down analytically (e.g. adjectives such as entertaining, funny, enjoyable, caring, personalised led to the category coded as tour guides' style). Categories were reduced and clustered and subcategories were tested against the data in axial coding. The central phenomenon of the study - the core catalytic role of tour guides, to which the other categories stand in relationship - emerged in the last phase of the coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This coding process and the connection between categories led to the development of our conceptual framework, elaborated in Chart 1. The QSR NVivo 9 software – which facilitates the development of categories and subcategories during the analysis process – was used to classify, sort and arrange data.

Results

Based on the results that emerged from the coding process, we have proposed a model in which the multidimensional realities of place (place as filming location, as leisure sphere and as heritage site) and time (the past and present of Dubrovnik and the fantasy world of GOT) co-exist, and tour guides enable tourists to switch between these different realities. In fact, the central phenomenon of the *Model of the multidimensional realities of mediatized places* is the tour guide, who facilitates the transitions between the different dimensions of reality (Chart 1).

PLEASE INSERT CHART 1 HERE

Tour guides are catalysts in the process of creating memorable experiences that stimulate tourist involvement in the interpretation of multidimensional realities and accelerate the emotional reactions of tour participants. The bidirectional arrows represent the shifts in multidimensional realities. Tour guides are involved in the experience, but only to the extent required by their role - as catalysts, they themselves undergo no permanent change. As the coding results reveal, tour guides must be knowledgeable about the multiple dimensions of reality in order to play both the classic (guide, fellow, storyteller) and the fiction specific roles (extra, secret keeper, insider, the integrator of different dimensions of reality) to make tourists' experiences more memorable (Chart 1). Any guide who aims to heighten and maintain tourists' interest needs to be captivating and humorous, according to Pabel and Pearce (2018). Personalised experiences and real interaction between tourists and guide are more likely to be delivered by small tours similar to the tour under scrutiny in this study where the number of participants is limited to nine. A guide's skill and ability to sense at which points in the tour to perform one of the various potential roles available - guide, performer, narrator, path-finder, extra, secret-keeper, integrator of the different dimensions of the tourists' experience - will influence participants' memories of the tour. In fact, as the coding of the TripAdvisor narratives revealed, well chosen times for taking GOT photos, the reenactment of particular scenes and the use of memorabilia are all part of the skillful navigation of the boundaries between different dimensions of reality, and necessary to making the experience memorable (Chart 1).

The categories and subcategories elaborated in the *Model of the multidimensional realities of mediatized places* are supported by the quotes in the following four tables. As shown in table 1, GOT fans (or their family and friends) select and book a themed tour online, before departure. Emotional involvement with the GOT TV series influences their destination choice and the pre-departure activities.

Table 1. Preparing the journey and booking the GOTDT tour

Categories	Quotes
Online information gathering	<p>I booked this tour on our actual five year wedding anniversary as GOT fans after doing much research on which GOT tour to book. The 5 star reviews here helped make my decision. (D23)</p> <p>After researching various tour groups, we booked ours with Game of Thrones Dubrovnik (D65)</p> <p>After doing my research on the GOT tours in Dubrovnik we decided on Game of Thrones Dubrovnik tour guys, since they had the most serious web site and the response was super fast. (D201)</p>
Booking a GOTDT tour	<p>We booked this online from the USA not really certain what to expect. From the moment we booked, it was great communication. First off, this is a real company who has local residents doing the tour. (D60)</p> <p>My wife and I booked the tour as my wife is a big fan although I haven't watched any!!! (D194)</p>

Source: the authors' own elaboration using grounded theory.

The symbolic meanings of GOT filming locations are increased by individuals' experiential and functional emotional gratification in decoding place meaning. It is usual for positive emotions to be kindled in urban tourists when they see a beautiful landscape. GOTDT tourists, however, construct their sense of place through their observation of place-based imagery, an already mediatized portrayal of landscape, and the performative value that the place gains through their guide's performance and ability to choreograph a tour. This overlap of meanings is evidenced in the quotes in table 2.

Table 2. Multiple realities of place and time

Categories	Quotes
Place as filming location	The tour guide was up to date with most GOT news as well as some juicy little nuggets of information from local sources. I felt I was living every scene with them and at some point felt I was a squire for one of Knights watching from a far what's unveiling before me. I wouldn't want to spoil the experience for you so go ahead and do the tour it's totally worth it! (D112)
Place as leisure sphere	Recommended a great restaurant for us since we have a vegetarian daughter. (D106) Antun also had great suggestions on local restaurants and shopping as well as beaches and things to do. (D60)
Place as heritage site	As a native of Croatia he provided historical info beyond G.O.T., so it was like having two separate tours in one. (D65) He also expanded on some of Croatia's/Dubrovnik's history so we felt like we got a comprehensive tour and didn't need to do a separate Dubrovnik tour. (D68)
Mixing multiple realities	They included a good mix of Croatian history + of course lots of GOT facts and details. (D78) She was incredibly knowledgeable about the show and the history of Dubrovnik, skilfully mixing her story telling to ensure you didn't miss any cultural landmark or GOT film spot. (D93) Of course he knows the backstage and locations stuff, but the GOT information is combined with Dubrovniks history and present (good restaurants, pubs etc.) and parallely he is able to talk with the passers-by, comment on their tourist behaviour, do jokes. (D19) He gave us a great overview of Dubrovnik as a city as well as who all the extras in GOT were and where they were recruited from. Antun also had great suggestions on local restaurants and shopping as well as beaches and things to do. (D60)

Source: the authors' own elaboration using grounded theory.

The discovery of the GOT backstage, the mediatized landscape and the appreciation of sites in terms of heritage and history all allow tourists to experience the three different dimensions as overlapping. GOTDT guides often use the names Dubrovnik and Kings Landing interchangeably on their tours. Tourists' online narratives highlight how tour guides build on their audience's televisual mediascape to

create emotionally satisfying tour experiences ('I felt I was living every scene with them'). Value attribution to mediatized places is simultaneously emotional and cognitive, as evidenced by the quotes.

The guide catalyses stimuli on a themed tour; their role is multidimensional, as the categories and subcategories identified in table 3 demonstrate. First, s/he physically leads tour participants around complex environments with multiple meanings. Second, s/he tries to involve tourists emotionally and to stimulate them to move between different dimensions of time and space: jumping from real time orientation to historical narrative and from the present (visiting a historical city) into a parallel present (visiting the city's iconic filming location). Participants' verbal and behavioural feedback co-creates the experience in a participatory atmosphere, as evidenced by the quotes in table 3.

Table 3. Tour guide as catalyst for experience

Categories (subcategories in brackets)	Quotes
Knowledgeable about the three categories of mediatized place	<p>He knew so much about the show and the town and was very informative and knowledgeable about Dubrovnik. He chatted away to us about other shows being made in Dubrovnik and anything and everything during the two hour tour and was patient in answering questions that had nothing to do with GOT. (D90)</p> <p>knows first hand knowledge of the show working in and around the show for many years and lives inside the city walls so knows all about the old town. Very informative on all aspects of the tour. (D49)</p> <p>our guide was very knowledgable, not only about the TV, series but also about the history of the city more broadly. (D51)</p> <p>Gave fantastic tips on places to eat and drink which we did follow up and he was spot on. (D49)</p>
Style (entertaining, funny, enjoyable, caring, personalised)	<p>Our guide, Robert, was friendly, funny, very informative and loads and loads of fun! (D8)</p> <p>What made it a memorable touch was that my hubs and I were celebrating our five year wedding anniversary and Ivana comes out with a cake! (D23)</p>
Classic roles (guide, fellow, storyteller)	<p>This tour was fun for all of us! Robert is an incredible storyteller. He is both knowledgeable and hilarious - he really makes the tour interesting and entertaining! (D14)</p> <p>He was so entertaining..and is now my favourite GOT character. His lean is spectacular :) (D26)</p> <p>We enjoyed Roberts many anecdotes of being an extra on the show as well as his theories, which were very interesting and I'd not even thought of a couple myself! "The seed is strong!" (D8)</p>

	Antun is an excellent guide, friendly and he knows all the details, anecdotes and interesting facts about GOT. (D5)
Specific roles (extra, secret keeper, insider, integrator of different dimensions of reality)	We got Robert as a guide who was an extra in the series (P44) and was able to give us extra goss on the goings on behind the scene - how they filmed in such a busy and small environment! (D10) He mixed Dubrovnik history in with various locations of filming . He has visual aids that help to truly put you into King's Landing (D251)
Director	Our guide, Robert, was knowledgeable and entertaining and even gave us some acting lessons for reenactments. (D98) He showed us all the most interesting scenes from GOT and had some very funny stories about being an extra in the show. We were provided with props from the show to reenact our favourite scenes , which was a lot of fun. (D122)

Source: the authors' own elaboration using grounded theory.

Added value is provided by the treasured information ('first-hand knowledge') on filming shared with participants by the 'secret-keeper' tour guide. Statements in the comments above reinforce the positive evaluation of the guide's performance: guiding style is clearly key to participants' enjoyment – and hence endorsement - of the experience. Some online reviewers, in order to highlight how rewarding their experience was, provide uncomplimentary information about other guiding services ('you hear tour guides spouting off a script with no passion') to reassure their readers of the value of this particular GOT tour, even for non-fans.

Through personalisation, the mediatized place of Dubrovik/Kings Landing gains another dimension, as the place where a highly emotional personal event has been celebrated on stage with spectators (fellow tourists). The excitement associated with novel and complex experiences during the tour is in itself gratifying, but the search for intense stimuli is further rewarded by social interactions with the tour guide and fellow tourists. For tour guides, integrating the different dimensions of the mediatized place requires a continuous shift between registers: one moment knowledgeable sharing information, the next engaging in spontaneous friendly small talk. The tourists also use different registers at different times. The use of language in TripAdvisor UGC is 'hybrid', combining the linguistic features of both writing and speaking; the conversational tone also reflects the emotions elicited by the tour (Francesconi, 2014). The guide's role as a secret-keeper, an 'extra' in GOT (someone who worked on the set), is key to the evocation of the emotions which make the tour memorable - as the tourists' online narratives confirm, this tour makes you an insider.

Urry & Larsen's (2011) findings are confirmed by our research: tourists enjoy the visual spectacle, play a performative role and allow their attention to be directed to the frame. In taking pictures of scenic

locations they create – with their cameras - their own original spectacle to be shared online. This spectacle is, of course, open to co-creation: tourists’ aesthetic appreciation is influenced by their guide, who shapes the performance by selecting angles, locations, positions and exactly what to show them. Bodily immersion in sites such as GOT locations, being with the tour guide and other tourists, and co-creating experiences with them, leads to the creation of parallel performances. In this unique interpretation of space, the camera or smart phone becomes an active agent shaping the experience and stimulating recollection in a virtual space, such as the TripAdvisor platform.

Table 4. Recollection of memorable experiences and the transformative role of tour guides

Categories	Quotes
Physical immersion in the mediatized place	We first embarked upon our climb up the Red Keep (Fort) - take plenty of water, wear a hat and comfortable shoes with a good grip. In August, this is hot work - Ivanna ensures you take plenty of stops, as she points out landmarks. The Fort has breath taking views showing the sea battle coast lines and panorama of Kings Landing. Next we explore the Old Town labyrinth of back streets to discover Little Finger's Brothel and other places of deception and intrigue. Until we face our final challenge of the Walk of Shame! (D93)
Cognitive effort (in history and in GOT narratives)	Throughout the tour he provided lots of background information and showed stills from the series to help us put the various locations into perspective. (D89) Just make sure you ask for Rob and prepare to be transported to the fantastic realm of GoT through his narrative! The guy was even among the helping cast members, and you will hear storied ans gossip from the set too! (D77)
Appointed times for taking GOT photos	He even knew exactly how to position us for the perfect photo opportunity with the old city. (D4) Get your sneaks ready! You will go through many of the sites then they surprise you beat the end... Which I don't want to spoil but definitely worth the pictures!!! (D23) Close to the end of the tour she brought some replicas of swords and other items that appear in GOT, and it was fun to take photos with them. (D36)
Conversations and interactions	We discussed theories about how the coming seasons will play out and where they could be filmed. (D131) Our tour group was very small, 5 people plus guide total. This allowed for more enriched conversations. (D65) I was able to listen in here and there and it just sounded like a rehearsed lecture, where our tour was a lot more interactive and personal. (D100)
Reenactment of particular scenes	We recreated the pier scene and also had a picture taken with the film scene photo in the same shot which was good. (D29) Wife has now completed her own personal 'walk of shame'! (D35)

	P44 was VERY upset that we did NOT recognize him from Season 2. He even reenacted the scene so we could go back and watch it. Bahaha!!! (D39)
Use of memorabilia	<p>What made the tour especially cool was that the guide had a booklet of pictures of the actual scenes from the show so we could do a side-by-side comparison of the real life set location and the final shot from the show. It definitely added to the experience rather than just trying to use your imagination. (D16)</p> <p>We felt like we were a part of the show with the replica props! (D22)</p> <p>The best part is the photo op with the props. All the swords and of course the SHAME bell. (D26)</p>
Physical effort (long excursions on site)	<p>You have to not mind climbing a million stairs - (not quite that many, but still rather a lot!) but as Robert said, for every mountain of steps you climb, there is a nice surprise for you waiting at the top! (D8)</p> <p>The tour was 3 hours & included lots of steps so if you plan on doing this take plenty of water & (took a spare pair of shoes too!) (D34)</p>
Follow up (Satisfaction, writing a review, booking next tour/next location, watching GOT again)	<p>This tour was by far my favorite when visiting Dubrovnik! Next time we go to Ireland I hope to book with you guys as well! (D23)</p> <p>One of the best tours I have ever done and they make it all so much more pleasant. If I ever revisit, I would definitely do this tour again. (D28)</p> <p>My photos don't really do the tour justice, but we had an amazing time and we highly highly recommend this tour for any GOT fan. (D8)</p> <p>Was amazing seeing the places GOT was filmed and now need to rewatch the entire series. (D6)</p>

Source: the authors' own elaboration using grounded theory.

The tour guides are expected to create appropriate scenarios in which to re-enact significant GOT scenes linked to the mediatized place (table 4). Such re-enactments, either by the guide - if a group prefers just to observe - or by the tourists themselves, if they wish to interact, are important to the creation of memorable experiences because - through re-enactment - tourists can interweave reality and fantasy, the sacred and the profane.

Memorabilia – swords, for example – have a double use. By incorporating them into tour designs, guides can create more interactive experiences, and thus allow tourists to engage in the creative process of giving meaning to mediatized GOT locations. Entering the tour script through memorabilia blurs the boundaries between on-site physical and fantasy worlds. Tour guides can stimulate emotional engagement by employing visual imagery, showing photo booklets and iconic scenes on different devices. Authentic film memorabilia (the real Iron Throne) encourage the identification of specific locations as must-see attractions. Memorabilia preserved in a museum where its consumption through picture taking manifest tourists' desire to attribute authenticity to the site. Such spatiality and tangibility

impress memories more firmly onto tourists' mindscapes and strengthen the link between real and fantasy worlds ('We felt like we were a part of the show with the replica props!' (D22) in table 4).

The appropriation of space and immersion in performative roles in the mediatized landscape require GOT tourist to exert themselves physically and cognitively; effort is a necessary building block of experience. Complaints about the difficulty of climbing stairs in the city are related to the physical conformation of the location and the challenge of conquering the mediatized place. Some reviews mention the problematic aspects of the walk – steps, heat etc. – but also refer to a rewarding element which seems to outweigh the negative aspects of the tour. Physical and cognitive effort, moreover, increases attention levels and encourages participants to be mentally present in the experience, such attentive presence subsequently enables content to be more readily activated in memory.

Memorable tour experiences can generate longer-lasting effects - such as rewatching the TV series in order to try to compare the multidimensional dimensions of mediatized place experienced on-site, or stimulating the desire to visit other GOT locations and to book other GOT tours. These extracts show that tourists who enjoyed the GOT tour and evaluated their experience as memorable, beyond expectations and recommend not only the tour specifically, but also the destination more generally. Furthermore, memorable experiences increased tourists' readiness to return to the destination. Rewatching GOT to detect the overlaps between their mindscape, the staged spectacle and the personally experienced landscape can further increase viewers' gratification and emotional involvement both with the TV series and the destination.

To conclude, small tours such as the GOTDT (n<9 participants), are able to design the kinds of memorable tourism experience that are positively recalled online. In table 5 we summarised the categories and subcategories that emerged from the content analysis of the tour participants' comments on the benefits and advantages of small sized groups over large tour groups.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

Conclusions and discussion

Investing GOT tourists with a performative role and providing highly interactive guided tours may be risky for service providers. The target audience for such tours should be segmented according to how involved tourists wish to be. The netnography analysis of GOT tourist narratives reveals a link between memorable experiences and involvement but imposed or forced interaction puts tour participants in uncomfortable situations. Based on Strauss & Corbin (1990) we used open coding to create categories, then axial coding to structure and link categories, finally, through selective coding interpretative themes were identified which allowed us to draw the framework of multilevel dimensions of reality of GOT filming locations in Dubrovnik. The proposed *Model of the multidimensional realities of mediatized*

places shows that different on-site realities coexist and overlap. Any company seeking to better position its on-site themed services in a highly competitive market must ensure that its tour guides are able to bring the particular realities chosen to life – the historical legacy of Dubrovnik, or the astonishing shooting locations (enriched with backstage anecdotes), for example. Meaningful tourism experiences are often recalled in online evaluations and ratings on the largest travel advice platform, TripAdvisor. Memorable tourism experiences, however, are not necessarily always highly interactive. According to Jerzy Grotowski, the Polish theatre director and theorist, audiences prefer being observers, watching without being seen or involved in the performance.

As Kim (2012) pointed out, screen tourists from different cultural backgrounds may both act in different ways, and attribute different values to the diverse realities they experience on-site. Some tourists aim to immerse themselves in the GOT atmosphere by re-enacting the scenes or dressing-up, others are more comfortable in observer roles. These differences lead to marketing implications: are tour guides able to perceive the different roles that tourists wish to play on-site, and then provide a tailor-made service?

From the destination management point of view, it is important to remember that tourists are physically present in the historic city of Dubrovnik, however diverse the meanings that tourists attribute to the mediatized place may be. World heritage sites and extremely popular tourism destinations (like Dubrovnik) are now having to cope with the effects of overtourism. Tourism experiences in mediatized places may have long-term online effects, which – even if they are very positive - do not necessarily cause tourists to return to the destination. Rewatching old GOT seasons or episodes set in Dubrovnik, and/or actively participating in social media platforms to discuss, produce and consume GOT experiences within virtual communities, can trigger positive emotions linked to the destination. The *Model of the multidimensional realities of mediatized places* could be leveraged by destination managers to design online platforms where tourists can create their own reality overlaps, with the help of historic photos, images, descriptions of past events and anecdotes collected during GOT filming. Such virtual reality experiences, with their tourist-driven multilevel realities, could provide destination managers with a tool for tackling overtourism while still preserving the destination's positive online reputation.

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Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Mendeley