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Visibility, power and exclusion: The (un)shifting constructions of normativity in wedding tourism brochures

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the trends in dominant representations of couples and places in wedding tourism promotional materials. It applies an eleven-category visibility framework to analyse 671 images from 16 years (2004–2019) of brochures from a UK-based tour operator. Content analysis shows that majority-centric imagery remains dominant throughout, with minority groups significantly under-represented, despite wider societal changes. Drawing on an intersectional approach, the article makes visible power asymmetries, omissions and inequalities in tourism representations. It argues that such exclusions and narrow portrayals of couples perpetuate not only the hegemonic messages of heteronormativity but also reinforce whiteness, age and body normativity, while maintaining gender stereotypes and intertwining traditional wedding ideals with consumerist desires for secular consumption.

Introduction

Media and advertising shape everyday reality and impact consumer behaviour through creating and reinforcing stereotyped imagery as well as influencing perceptions and social norms (van Dijk, 2000). Similarly, tourism promotional materials are ingrained in the politics of representation and competition over meanings that control modes of representations (Mehan, 2000), with dominant visual ideologies foregrounding certain images, conveying certain meanings, promoting certain roles and relationships, while discarding others (Pritchard, 2001). Tourism promotional imagery involves construction of places and people within the wider dominant ideological context (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2002), and has long been critiqued for portraying tourists as predominantly white, heterosexual, able-bodied and conventionally attractive (Pritchard, 2001). This reflects and reinforces hegemonic views of society, mostly dictated by and targeted to white, male Western audiences (Edelheim, 2007).

To date, numerous studies have analysed representations of people and places in tourism promotion, ranging from state-sponsored tourism promotional materials and campaigns to lifestyle magazines (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2002; Buzinde et al., 2006; Chhabra et al., 2011; Edelheim, 2007; Frohlick & Johnston, 2011; Morgan & Pritchard, 2018; Pritchard, 2001; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000; Small, 2017). These works critique the stereotypical imagery used and the non-inclusiveness of tourism representations (Buzinde et al., 2006; Edelheim, 2007), where places and bodies are commodified, racialised, sexualised, stereotyped and constructed as exotic, romantic and heterosexual (Frohlick & Johnston, 2011; Morgan & Pritchard, 2018).

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Little is known however about the extent to which tourism representations change over time to include previously under-represented groups, what the dominant trends are, and whether the stereotypical nature of representations evolves in line with wider societal changes. Utilising content analysis of 671 images over 16 years of brochures from a major UK-based tour operator, this article explores the following research question: To what extent and in what ways have the dominant representations of couples in wedding tourism promotional materials evolved between 2004 and 2019 in the context of changing societal norms? To date, the nature of imagery in wedding tourism promotional materials remains unexplored and wedding tourism remains under-researched (for notable exceptions see Bertella, 2015; Johnston, 2006). Analyses of representations of couples, as opposed to individuals, are also rare. Through applying an eleven-category framework, which we conceptualise as the *visibility framework*, the article allows for intersections of gender, ethnicity, age, heteronormativity and able-bodiness in tourism representations to be made visible, power asymmetries, inequalities and exclusions acknowledged, and symbolic meanings of couples and weddings explored.

This examination is timely and important for several reasons. First, it enhances understanding of how couples are represented in 21st century promotional materials and the extent to which these representations reflect modern Western social ideals of diversity and equality. Examining representations of couples is particularly interesting in the modern age of individualism and liquid love (Bauman, 2003), where ideals of traditional family become more liquid and are mediated through individualised and aspirational discourses of consumer choice and agency (Carter, 2017). Second, there is a need to better understand how gender, age, heteronormativity, ethnicity and (dis)ability are constructed, and how these intersect, in order to appreciate the extent to which tourism representations are visually inclusive along these dimensions. This is sociologically important as it helps evaluate the politics of representation in tourism promotional materials, examine how social identities and norms are constructed, wedding dreams shaped and normalised (Ingraham, 2008), and explore potential socio-cultural implications. Third, analysing trends in representations over the 16-year period increases understanding of the extent to which these changes reflect UK legal and societal changes (e.g. same-sex marriage legalisation, rise in inter-ethnic relationships, rise in re-marriages, ageing population). Few studies identify trends in representations over time (for notable exceptions see Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004). As norms, ideals, relationships and family structures in society change, it becomes important to explore if and how these changes are represented in promotional materials, such as tourism brochures, and what patterns persist in terms of the presence of stereotypes and contemporary constructions of weddings and heteronormativity (Ingraham, 2008; Johnston, 2006).

Finally, research to date focuses on tourism brochures in general or tourism campaigns at one point in time rather than longitudinally (Chhabra et al., 2011; Pritchard, 2001; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000). In contrast, this study examines representations in tourism brochures over 16-year period for a niche but significant market – weddings abroad – that remains under-researched. Weddings constitute an ideal context to study normativity and representations of couples. Culturally considered a milestone event in one's life, weddings represent the idealisation of marriage (Carter & Duncan, 2017), and are (re) produced through a heterosexual and gender normative (Kimport, 2012). While traditionally rooted, weddings are socially constructed and have undergone legal, socio-cultural and consumerist changes over the years, which are discussed in the next section. While the number of weddings taking place each year in the UK has been declining, the weddings abroad sector has experienced substantial growth in the past two decades, proving very profitable for tour operators and destinations (Johnston, 2006). Overall, nearly one in five (18%) UK weddings took place overseas in 2010, an increase of 27% since 2005 (Mintel, 2011). The weddings abroad sector comprises of first-time marriages, re-marriages, same-sex marriages and renewal of vows, with the core segment being re-marriages (Major et al., 2010). In this article, we adopt a quantitative intersectional framework to examine the multiple and intersecting axes of representation (gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability) in weddings abroad tourism promotional materials, theorising the constructions of normativity and the dominant imagery of weddings and couples.

Weddings and Western society

The white wedding ideal is deeply embedded in and permeates popular Western culture with images of the perfect wedding day and bridal appearance (Broekhuizen & Evans, 2016; Carter & Duncan, 2017). The expression 'white wedding' refers to the spectacle of a bride in a formal white wedding gown as well as other traditional aspects of the wedding, now extensively commodified in Western societies (Boden, 2003; Ingraham, 2008). White weddings reproduce certain norms and patriarchal relations, retraditionalise gender roles, reinforce the performance of heteronormativity as well as ideals of body perfection (Broekhuizen & Evans, 2016; Ingraham, 2008; Johnston, 2006; Kimport, 2012). As such, wedding culture and the wedding industry provide a "very rich source of data about how we give meaning to heterosexuality and marriage and to what end" (Ingraham, 2008, p. 3). Since the 1970s, driven by increasing consumerism, individualism as well as the pursuit of wedding and body perfection, the wedding day has changed from a largely religious ritual to a modern cultural, predominantly secular, spectacle in which the consumer seeks to create a bespoke memorable experience (Boden, 2003; Carter, 2017). Even though the social need for marriage is diminishing in Western societies as cultural norms are relaxing, these "supposedly unique and deeply personal events usually end up looking remarkably the same" and reaffirm traditions (Carter & Duncan, 2017, p. 4).

Socio-cultural trends and legal changes in the UK in the past few decades have influenced how weddings are perceived, constructed and consumed. Both men and women now marry later in life. The average age of opposite-sex marriage age for women (35.7 years) and men (38 years) has increased by eleven years between 1970 and 2017 (ONS, 2020a). For same-sex couples, average marriage age is slightly higher, at 36.6 years for women and 40.1 years for men (ONS, 2020a). Among same-sex couples, women predominantly marry when under 50 years, while men largely marry aged 50 and over (ONS, 2020a). Additionally, marriages among the over-65s increased by 46% in a decade, from 7468 in 2004 to 10,937 in 2014 (ONS, 2017). Considering this is the fastest-growing age group in the UK (ONS, 2019b), weddings of older couples are expected to continue to rise. Opposite-sex marriages continue to decline, with marriage

rates at the lowest level on record (a 45% decrease since 1972) (ONS, 2020a). In 1970, there were 415,000 opposite-sex marriages in the UK, which declined to 331,000 in 1991 and to 235,910 in 2017 (ONS, 2020a).

Additionally, the cost of a UK wedding has increased from an average of £20,020 in 2009 to over £32,000 in 2018 (Statista, 2019). Since the 1994 Marriage Act enabled venues, such as castles and stately homes, to perform civil ceremonies (Boden, 2003), religious weddings have declined, with church ceremonies accounting for only 23% in 2017, compared to 35% in 2005 and 69% in 1964 (ONS, 2020a). Broader changes in attitudes to marriages in the UK are also reflected in other legal reforms. Civil partnerships for same-sex couples were legalised in 2005 and same-sex marriage was legalised in 2014 (ONS, 2020c), with nearly 7000 same-sex marriages in 2017 (44% were male couples and 56% female couples) (ONS, 2020a). Since the Divorce Reform Act 1969 (which made it easier for couples to divorce upon separation), a growing number of wedding ceremonies are for second marriages and an ageing population expands the demand for renewal of vows ceremonies (Major et al., 2010). In 2017, 33% of marriages involved one or both parties who were previously married (ONS, 2020a).

While the overall number of marriages continues to decline, weddings abroad have grown in popularity. In the UK, weddings abroad as a tourism product started to become popular in the early 2000s, with established tour operators entering the market soon after and the UK government starting to collect statistics in 2002. The significant increase in UK residents getting married overseas (Mintel, 2011; ONS, 2020b) is mostly attributed to increased media coverage of celebrity weddings and wedding shows in popular culture (Carter & Duncan, 2017) as well as the affordability of weddings abroad, also associated with shorter guest lists (Major et al., 2010). In 2017, an estimated 104,000 UK residents married abroad, which represents an increase of 42% compared to 2016 (ONS, 2020b). Places and destinations play a central role in weddings. While wedding locations are part of the experience, they can also perpetuate the stereotypical imagery of weddings as romantic and paradise-like settings as well as reproducing their heteronormativity (Bertella, 2015; Johnston, 2006). Examining the significance of place for wedding tourism, Johnston's (2006, p. 204) analysis of New Zealand's tourism promotional materials showed that weddings are constructed as "pure, romantic, exotic, and natural", with images of landscapes – such as rugged mountains, blue water coastlines and golden beaches – core to the wedding abroad package as well as accentuating "the naturalness of heterosexuality and nature spaces" where foreign exotic nature symbolises romantic and sensual space. In analysing constructions of weddings abroad, marketers' destination scenery choices (i.e. the setting against which the photo is taken) are thus integral to examine as these contribute to the creation of the ideal wedding imaginary.

Constructions of normativity in tourism promotional materials

Despite the rise in social media platforms and influence of tourist-generated images, travel brochures and promotional magazines remain fundamental sources of information for potential tourists (Hsu & Song, 2013). Tour operators prioritise visual images over textual information in marketing, as they are more easily recalled and influence consumer behaviour (Hsu & Song, 2013). Existing studies on destination imagery are often framed within a consumerist lens, focusing on practical implications of effective promotion strategies for Destination Management Organisations (Walters & Cassel, 2016), rather than on broader socio-cultural implications. Yet, how destinations, tourists and host communities are constructed in promotional materials is significant in shaping tourists' perceptions and reproducing stereotyped power roles (e.g. caricaturing or racialising host communities).

This is particularly relevant in constructions of gender, where the media (re)create expectations of acceptable gender behaviours and encourage particular ways of seeing the world and relationships (Pritchard, 2001). In studies on gendered tourism imagery (Morgan & Pritchard, 2018; Pritchard, 2001; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000), women are frequently sexualised, exoticised, objectified, and portrayed as passive and decorative (in contrast to men generally shown as active). Over the last forty years, various studies assessing the scale of gender advertising in a range of sectors reported limited change in the use of stereotypical imagery (see Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Chhabra et al., 2011; Goffman, 1979; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004). Influential in this field is Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* (1976). Numerous studies have used Goffman's (1979) framework to identify gender stereotyping in various domains, from fashion to general interest magazines to tourism (Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004). Specifically, Sirakaya and Sonmez (2000) and Chhabra et al. (2011) found that tourism suffers from the same gender stereotyping in its promotional materials as other sectors.

While gender stereotyping remains important, we argue that there is a need to move the focus beyond gendered portrayals and incorporate other markers of social identity when analysing tourism imagery. Ethnic minorities, inter-ethnic and same-sex couples, LGBTQ+, older adults as well as people with disabilities are either vastly underrepresented in media advertising or are portrayed stereotypically (Buzinde et al., 2006; Edelheim, 2007). These groups may lack effective platforms to meaningfully challenge how they are represented beyond utilising consumer voice or withholding purchasing power. Yet, as Frohlick and Johnston (2011, p. 1093) argue, "[b]odily difference such as age, ethnicity, nationality and abilities and relations of power also determine who we are, what we do, and how we are represented". Below, we emphasise the importance of incorporating these dimensions into analyses of tourism promotional materials to explore inequalities and omissions, and where appropriate help create fairer representations reflective of wider societal changes.

Firstly, ethnic minority representations in tourism marketing are often problematic, as they tend to commodify and are saturated with racialised discourses. Analysing ethnic representations in Canadian tourism brochures, Buzinde et al. (2006, pp. 723–724) found "a stark resemblance to the heavily criticised tourism portrayals of Southern countries" and argued that "[s]uch portrayals alienate minority groups and reinforce social stereotypes instead of breaking them down". In the UK, 14% of the population identify as Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) (ONS, 2012), and nearly one in ten (2.3 million) who lived as part of a couple were in an inter-ethnic relationship, which represents an increase from 7% in 2001 (ONS, 2014). Despite their purchasing power and active participation in tourism, the needs of minority ethnic groups often go unrecognised as they are perceived as part of the tourism product (and thus

stereotyped) rather than as potential tourists (Buzinde et al., 2006; Klemm, 2002). At the same time, it has been shown that the use of ethnically diverse models in advertising does not negatively influence the views of the white majority group but does positively influence ethnic minority groups living within a diverse community (Lee et al., 2002).

Secondly, older people have also been marginalised in mainstream marketing for products such as holidays. Yet, the UK population is ageing significantly, with 18.3% aged 65 and over (ONS, 2019b). The over 65s is the fastest-growing age group in the UK and by 2050 one in four will be aged 65 and over (ONS, 2019b), many with high disposable income (Simcock & Sudbury, 2006). Similarly to ethnic minorities and LGBTQ+ groups, the ageing population also favours advertising images which represent them and their lifestyle (Szmigin & Carrigan, 2000, p. 128). The general lack of diversity within marketing materials is often associated with the low average age of advertising agency staff (34 years old), with only 5.9% of staff aged over 50 (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA), 2017; Simcock & Sudbury, 2006). Likewise, representations of people with visible disabilities are largely absent from tourism promotional materials, leaving this group invisible and highlighting the hegemonic norm (Edelheim, 2007). Indeed, the bodies of tourists in tourism campaigns are portrayed as predominantly "fit, white, young, able, and importantly, heterosexual" (Frohlick & Johnston, 2011, p. 1105).

Thirdly, same-sex couples are also under-represented in tourism promotional materials. Yet, LGBTQ+ consumers are considered a lucrative market for travel organisations (Oakenfall & Greenlee, 2005, p. 422). In 2018, 1.2 million of the UK population aged 16 and over identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (ONS, 2020c). While many organisations targeting LGBTQ+ consumers advertise directly via LGBTQ+ magazines, only 3% of the LGBTQ+ community read these publications, whereas over 80% engage with mainstream media outlets (Oakenfall & Greenlee, 2005). Using mainstream media to target LGBTQ+ consumers is considered more challenging than targeting ethnic minorities due to varying levels of tolerance among the heterosexual population (Ivory, 2019). Indeed, in tourism imagery, heterosexuality is naturalised and constructed as "proper, respectable, moral and normal" (Johnston, 2006, p. 194), with heteronormative bodies predominant.

Taking account of the persisting marginalisation of minority groups in advertising, this article moves forward analyses of the politics of representation in tourism promotional materials through adopting an intersectional approach. Originating from black feminist theories (Crenshaw, 1991), intersectionality recognises that multiple social differences, including gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and age, shape experiences of (dis)advantage (Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005). As intersectionality helps make inequalities and disparities visible, emphasising their multi-dimensionality and contextuality (Mcmaster & Cook, 2019), this article utilises this approach to examine the intersecting axes of representations of couples in weddings abroad tourism brochures to identify trends over time and across different social categories.

Methods

To examine patterns in dominant representations of couples in weddings abroad tourism materials, we analysed brochures published by a major UK-based tour operator over the last 16 years (2004–2019). This operator was one of the first mainstream companies to enter the weddings abroad market in 2003, with the 2004 brochure being the first one. We were granted access to digital copies of these brochures from 2011 to 2019 and the older copies were obtained from the company archives. Content analysis was deemed the most appropriate method to examine 671 visual images featured in these brochures. Critical discourse analysis – used in other studies on tourism representations (Morgan & Pritchard, 2018; Pritchard, 2001; Small, 2017) – was also considered but judged not ideally suited as the study aimed to capture broader trends over time across different intersectional categories.

Content analysis allows researchers to quantify and categorise media messages (Buzinde et al., 2006; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1990), and provides clear guidelines for "engaging systematically with large numbers of images", a process which facilitates the replication and adaptation of frameworks in future studies (Rose, 2012, p. 101). This research technique has also been used to examine dominant representations of minority groups within tourism promotional materials (Buzinde et al., 2006; Pritchard, 2001). Despite being predominantly quantitative in nature, content analysis does not preclude qualitative interpretation. The codes in an image connect to the wider context within which that image makes sense and all the stages of the process entail decisions about meaning and relevance (Rose, 2012). Subsequently, overarching themes can emerge (Lutz & Collins, 1993). Despite certain limitations in dealing with the cultural significance of images, content analysis helps unveil "patterns that are too subtle to be visible on casual inspection and protection against an unconscious search" (Lutz & Collins, 1993, p. 89). In this study, the researchers' notes, compiled during the process of coding, were used to complement quantitative analysis and aid interpretation in light of the literature search (Buzinde et al., 2006). Particular attention was paid to images of minority groups and nuances in representations (size of images, position on page, absences, intersectional categories).

While more widely used in qualitative research, intersectionality is increasingly deployed in quantitative studies to "adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions" (McCall, 2005, p. 1773, see also Mcmaster & Cook, 2019). A quantitative eleven-category intersectional framework – which we refer to as the visibility framework – was applied to examine dominant imagery and trends in promotional materials across a range of categories.

To analyse gendered portrayals of couples, a combination of categories devised by Goffman (1979), and later adapted by Kang (1997), was utilised. While a number of studies followed Goffman's framework to examine representations of women in tourism promotional materials (Chhabra et al., 2011; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000), research exploring representations of both men and women remains scant (for notable exceptions in tourism see Chhabra et al., 2011; Pritchard, 2001; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000). Additionally, previous studies also focus on one specific year. For this study, four categories from the six domains proposed by Goffman (1979) were used in addition to two categories suggested by Kang (1997). "Function ranking" and "gender depiction in the family" were excluded.

The first category refers to the male being observed as the instructor or in a superior role (e.g. as a doctor or executive). This category was not utilised because promotional wedding imagery is unlikely to suggest the profession or work role of the models. The category "gender depiction in the family" was not analysed because the focus of this research is on couples rather than families.

Hence, six categories for analysing gender representations within the couple were adopted: 1) *relative size*, when one model is depicted as taller or larger than their partner in an exaggerated manner through camera angles and positioning techniques; 2) *feminine touch*, when the individual caresses or fondles an object or themselves in an unnatural way rather than purposefully grasping or holding it; 3) *subordination*, where the model lowers themselves in a manner which depicts accepted subordination, including lying or sitting down; 4) *licensed withdrawal*, when the model is psychologically removed from the situation by an averted gaze or displaying an extensive, unnatural smile; 5) *body display* (Kang, 1997), when a visible degree of nudity is displayed (e.g. body-revealing clothes, exposed cleavages, and partial nudity); and 6) *independence* (Kang, 1997), when the model is depicted as not independent and self-assertive (e.g. male is leading the female or the reverse).

Representations of couples were also examined considering 7) *ethnicity* (presence/absence of visible minority ethnic or inter-ethnic couples) (ONS, 2019a). This category aligns to the two-category ethnicity breakdown of white and ethnic minority used in UK statistics (ONS, 2019a). The codebook also includes 8) *age* (presence/absence of mature couples); 9) *sexual orientation* (presence/absence of same-sex couples); and 10) *disability* (presence/absence of visible disabilities). Furthermore, 11) *the scene*, i.e. the setting where couples are featured, was analysed. The preliminary examination of the images showed that beach-related scenes were prevalent in brochures, and therefore included for coding in this study. A coding scheme of 1 and 0 was adopted; a score of 1 meaning presence and 0 meaning absence (Kang, 1997). A different code (9) was used when the category was not applicable (where same-sex couples were depicted, the categories resulting from Goffman's framework were not used for those particular pictures). The final codebook can be found in Table 1.

To enhance the reliability of the content analysis, a three-step process incorporating multiple coders, assessment of intercoder reliability and multiple measures was adopted (Buzinde et al., 2006; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000). Firstly, taking a research-informed approach, three coders discussed and assessed the criteria to code each category. The process of revising the procedures of coding resulted in the preparation of a code sheet with detailed guidelines. Secondly, two independent pilot tests were conducted using the proposed guidelines – one test was conducted by the three coders and another test was performed by a group of undergraduate students who received directions on the process of coding. This process intended to maximise mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness of the recorded units, as proposed by Weber (1990) and Buzinde et al. (2006). The pilot tests resulted in refinement of the coding criteria. For example, clearer criteria for examining age were established (e.g. visible signs of ageing in the face and neck, grey hair). Thirdly, each brochure was coded by two coders independently.

A total of 16 years (2004–2019) worth of brochures were analysed, which corresponds to 16 brochures (one edition per year). Prior to 2008, the brochures contained considerably fewer pages than the newer versions and in longer brochures images tended to be duplicated. Hence, it was considered optimal that the first 45 images depicting a couple would be retained for analysis in newer brochures. Accordingly, 45 pictures were analysed in all brochures, except for 2004 (n = 22), 2005 (n = 33), 2006 (n = 36), 2007 (n = 40), given the reasons presented above. This process resulted in the examination of 671 images. Pictures that did not feature couples, as well as duplicates in the same brochure, were excluded from further analysis. The intercoder agreement varied from a low of 91% (relative size) and a high of 98% (e.g. ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability). A third coder was used to evaluate the unresolved

Table 1
Visibility framework codebook.

Categories (couple representation)	Instructions 1 - presence; 0 - absence; 9 - N/A	Studies that inform the framework
Relative size	The man/woman is visibly taller or larger	Goffman (1979); Kang (1997); Chhabra et al. (2011); Lindner (2004); Pritchard (2001); Sirakaya and Sonmez (2000).
Feminine touch	The man/woman caresses or fondles an object or himself/herself in an unnatural way rather than purposefully grasping or holding it	
Subordination	The man/woman lowers himself/herself in a manner which suggests accepted subordination (in relation to the other person), including lying, bending or sitting down	
Licensed withdrawal	The man/woman is psychologically removed from the situation by an averted gaze (e.g. being distracted, looking in a different direction than the partner or having closed eyes), displaying an extensive, unnatural smile or hiding mouth with fingers	
Body display	The man/woman is depicted by a visible degree of nudity (e.g. beachwear, open shirt, revealing neckline)	
Independence	When the man/woman is depicted as not independent and self-assertive (e.g. an image which shows a woman leading a man or the reverse)	
Ethnicity	At least one of the couple is of visible minority ethnic background.	Buzinde et al. (2006); Edelheim (2007); Klemm (2002).
Age	Both appear to be 50 or older (e.g. visible signs of ageing in the neck and face, grey hair).	Edelheim (2007); Simcock and Sudbury (2006); Szmigin and Carrigan (2000).
Sexual orientation	Same-sex couple is featured. *This category seeks to identify presence/absence of heteronormativity.	Frohlick and Johnston (2011); Ivory (2019); Johnston (2006); Kimport (2012).
Disability	At least one of the couple has a visible disability.	Edelheim (2007); Pritchard (2001).
Scene	Presence of a beach-related scene. *This category refers to the framing of the image and persons within a place.	Frohlick and Johnston (2011); Johnston (2006); Lindner (2004); Walters and Cassel (2016).

cases, as proposed in previous research (Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000), and as a result no conflicting frames remained in the analysis.

Data gathered from content analysis were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Data analysis included frequency tables, cross-tabulations, and chi-square tests. Chi-square tests were used to determine if patterns (presence/absence) varied overall in the stereotypical representations of the categories under study across the sixteen brochures/years. Individual chi-squares and *p*-values per brochure, considering each category, were also calculated using the adjusted residual values (Beasley & Schumacker, 1995). Considering that the use of large samples can lead to large chi-squares and that a number of tests were performed, a conservative significance level of 1% was preferred to interpret results. In particular cases, where 20% or more cells had an expected count less than five due to the low representation of a stereotype, exact tests were used to calculate the *p*-value and results were treated with caution. When comparisons between the representation of females and males in the same brochures (paired-samples) were carried out, non-parametric McNemar-Bowker's chi-square tests were conducted for testing differences in dichotomous (presence/absence) variables (McNemar, 1947). McNemar-Bowker's chi-square test was not performed when 20% or more cells had an expected count less than five.

Results

The use of chi-square tests shows that the stereotypical representations of women significantly vary across brochures/years (Table 2) in the domains of relative size ($\chi^2(15) = 74.209$; p-value = 0.000), feminine touch ($\chi^2(15) = 195.122$; p-value = 0.000), subordination ($\chi^2(15) = 56.887$; p-value = 0.000), licensed withdrawal ($\chi^2(15) = 56.504$; p-value = 0.000), and body display ($\chi^2(15) = 72.545$; p-value = 0.000). The exception is the portrayal of females as dependent on their male counterpart, where the pattern does not vary overall across brochures, considering a significance level of 1% ($\chi^2(15) = 25.752$; p-value = 0.041). Accordingly, in the 2004 brochure, this category was represented in 45.5% of the images ($\chi^2(1) = 0.25$; p-value = 0.617), and in 2019 this was still present in 37.5% of the pictures ($\chi^2(1) = 0.16$; p-value = 0.689).

For relative size, results suggest a statistically significant variation in the depiction of females as exaggeratedly smaller than their male counterparts. While in 2004 this category was present in 63.6% of the pictures analysed, this representation had a statistically significant decrease to 26.7% in 2015 ($\chi^2(1) = 9.610$, p-value = 0.002), 20.5% in 2016 ($\chi^2(1) = 16.000$, p-value = 0.000), and 15.9% in 2017 ($\chi^2(1) = 16.160$, p-value = 0.000). However, this pattern of decrease is not present in the most recent brochures. In fact, the presence of this stereotypical representation does not statistically vary in 2018 ($\chi^2(1) = 6.250$, p-value = 0.012), if considering a level of significance of 1%. It can be observed that the stereotype is still present in 31% of the images. Similarly, in the 2019 brochure, results (57.5%) show that there is no statistically significant variation in the data, which suggests that the depiction of this representation still maintains in recent brochures ($\chi^2(1) = 1.210$, p-value = 0.271).

Conversely, there is a constant decrease in the portrayal of women caressing or fondling an object or herself in an unnatural way. For example, while in the 2004 brochure female touch was visible in 72.3% of the pictures ($\chi^2(1) = 16.810$, p-value = 0.000), in 2013 this representation was only present in 4.5% of images ($\chi^2(1) = 16.810$, p-value = 0.000). A variation can also be observed regarding the representation of subordination, considering that in 2004, 54.5% of females were portrayed in a lowered position, lying or sitting down ($\chi^2(1) = 9.6100$, p-value = 0.002), and in 2016 this result significantly reduced to 6.8% ($\chi^2(1) = 9.000$, p-value = 0.003). However, in 2019, there is no significant variation, and the representation of subordination was used in 20% of images ($\chi^2(1) = 0.81$, p-

Table 2
Representations of women.

Year/category	Relative size (%)	Feminine touch (%)	Subordination (%)	Licensed withdrawal (%)	Body display (%)	Not independent (%)
2004	63.6	72.7[1]	54.5[1]	81.8	0[1]	45.5
2005	45.5	66.7[1]	30.3	78.8	15.2	24.2
2006	63.9	63.9[1]	30.6	69.4	25.0	25.0
2007	57.5	50.0	40.0	75.0	40.0	30.0
2008	57.8	64.4[1]	40.0	91.1[1]	40.0	40.0
2009	60.0	64.4[1]	46.7[1]	71.1	48.9[1]	31.1
2010	68.9[1]	60.0[1]	37.8	62.2	35.6	26.7
2011	46.7	15.6	22.2	42.2[1]	28.9	46.7
2012	57.8	17.8	31.1	44.4	35.6	51.1
2013	65.9	4.5[1]	18.2	50.0	45.5[1]	52.3
2014	57.8	8.9[1]	17.8	62.2	46.7[1]	53.3
2015	26.7[1]	8.9[1]	6.7[1]	48.9	20.0	40.0
2016	20.5[1]	9.1[1]	6.8[1]	43.2	13.6	43.2
2017	15.9[1]	11.9[1]	20.5	54.5	6.8[1]	52.3
2018	31.0[2]	11.9[1]	14.3	52.4	9.5[1]	40.5
2019	57.5	17.5	20.0	60.0	10.0	37.5
X^2 (*df*)	74.209(15)	195.122(15)	56.887(15)	56.504(15)	72.545(15)	25.752(15)
p-Value	0.000[1]	0.000[1]	0.000[1]	0.000[1]	0.000[1]	0.041[2]
Minimum expected count	10.83	7.07	5.80	7.19	6.00	8.87

[1] p-value < 0.01.
[2] p-value < 0.05.

value = 0.3681).

Regarding women's portrayals with expansive smiles, averted gaze or hiding mouth with fingers, results suggest a significant variation in 2008, where the representation of licensed withdrawal reached 91.1% of the images ($\chi^2(1) = 18.490$, p-value = 0.000). While the presence of this category significantly decreased in one specific year (2011: 42.2%) ($\chi^2(1) = 6.760$, p-value = 0.009), in newer brochures the pattern seems not to significantly vary, and this stereotype featured in 60% of the pictures in 2019 ($\chi^2(1) = 1.00$, p-value = 0.2713). As for body display, while in 2004 there was no visible degree of female nudity featured in pictures, this aspect significantly increased to 48.9% in 2009 ($\chi^2(1) = 11.56$, p-value = 0.000). This variation is also significant in 2013 ($\chi^2(1) = 7.84$, p-value = 0.005), and 2014 ($\chi^2(1) = 9.00$, p-value = 0.003). Notwithstanding, the results suggest that there is a statistically significant decrease in this type of representation post-2016. In 2017 ($\chi^2(1) = 7.29$, p-value = 0.007), body display was only present in 6.8% of pictures.

For portrayals of men (Table 3), chi-square tests suggest that the portrayals of males significantly vary across the brochures analysed with regards the depiction of Goffman's domain of relative size ($\chi^2(15) = 40.919$; p-value = 0.000). Table 3 shows that these representations are more visible in early years, such as 2005 (42.4%) and 2006 (36.1%) ($\chi^2(1) = 12.96$; p-value = 0.000318 and $\chi^2(1) = 7.84$; p-value = 0.0051, respectively). However, data does not significantly vary in brochures released more recently, where the pattern maintains (for a 1% level of confidence). Indeed, from 2015 the presence of this representation in relation to men is in less than 15% of the pictures (2015: $\chi^2(1) = 2.89$; p-value = 0.0891). When compared to women, McNemar-Bowker's chi-square reveals that females are more likely to be seen as exaggeratedly portrayed as smaller (49.2%, presence in 325 pictures out of 660) than their male counterparts (18.6%, presence in 123 pictures out of 660) through the use of certain camera angles and positioning techniques ($\chi^2(1) = 90.181$, p-value = 0.000).

In the licensed withdrawal category, the pattern of how men are portrayed maintains across brochures since there is no statistically significant variation in the distribution of data ($\chi^2(15) = 7.490$; p-value = 0.943). Notably, the 2019 brochure includes 16 pictures (40%) depicting men with expansive smiles, averted gaze, or hiding mouth with fingers. Nevertheless, a McNemar-Bowker's chi-square test shows that the use of this type of representation significantly differs between males and females ($\chi^2(1) = 154.594$, p-value = 0.000), as more pictures portrayed women in this way when compared to men (Female: 60.1%, presence in 400 pictures out of 660; Men: 32.6%, presence in 215 pictures out of 660).

Moreover, in several brochures, some categories are completely absent in relation to men (Table 3), a phenomenon that is not visible in relation to women, with the exception of body display in the 2004 brochure (Table 2). Hence, a high number of cells count less than five, and for that reason, exact p-values were calculated, which should be treated with caution (Table 3). For a significance level of 1%, results suggest that for feminine touch ($\chi^2(15) = 18.640$; p-value = 0.215), subordination ($\chi^2(15) = 29.736$; p-value = 0.12), and body display ($\chi^2(15) = 28.236$; p-value = 0.02), the distribution of data does not significantly vary, and the presence of these representations is nearly non-existent across brochures. For example, in 2014, feminine touch was used in a maximum of four images per brochure (8.9%); in 2009 and 2010, men were in a subordinated position (depicted in a lowered position, lying or sitting down) in a maximum of seven images (15.6%); and male body display was visible in 2011 in a maximum of seven images per brochure (15.6%).

As for independence, results suggest that the distribution of data varies ($\chi^2(15) = 34.715$; p-value = 0.004). In 2004, the presence of

Table 3
Representations of men.

Year/category	Relative size (%)	Feminine touch (%)	Subordination (%)	Licensed withdrawal (%)	Body display (%)	Not independent (%)
2004	31.8	4.5	4.5	22.7	0	0
2005	42.4[1]	3.0	15.2	34.4	6.1	0
2006	36.1[1]	2.8	17.1	36.1	11.1	5.6
2007	32.5	0	12.5	28.2	10.0	0
2008	20.0	4.4	8.9	31.1	11.1	0
2009	17.8	0	15.6	35.6	13.3	0
2010	17.8	6.7	15.6	22.2	4.4	2.2
2011	17.8	4.4	4.4	37.8	15.6[2]	8.9
2012	13.3	2.2	6.7	35.6	13.3	4.4
2013	11.4	0	6.8	36.4	9.1	6.8
2014	22.2	8.9	6.7	37.8	13.3	15.6[1]
2015	8.9	0	0	28.9	0	0
2016	6.8[2]	0	0	27.3	4.5	0
2017	13.6	2.3	0	34.1	0	2.3
2018	9.5	2.4	4.8	31.0	0	4.8
2019	12.5	0	5.0	40.0	2.5	5
X^2 (*df*)	40.919 (15)	18.640 (15)	29.736 (15)	7.490 (15)	28.236 (15)	34.715 (15)
p-Value	0.000[1]	0.215[3]	0.12[4]	0.943	0.02[2,4]	0.004[1,3]
Minimum expected count	4.10	0.57	1.67	7.19	1.63	0.80
Expected count less than 5	1 cell (3.1%)	16 cells (50%)	16 cells (50%)	0 cells (0%)	16 cells (50%)	16 cells (50%)

[1] p-value < 0.01.
[2] p-value < 0.05.
[3,4] Due to low expected values, exact tests were used to calculate the p-value (Exact[3] or Monte Carlo[4], respectively) and should be treated with caution.

this stereotype was non-existent and in 2014 this representation significantly increased to 15.6% ($\chi^2(1) = 19.360$; p-value = 0.000). In 2019, this stereotypical domain was present in 5% of the total of images analysed.

Table 4 illustrates the representation of minority groups. Overall, there is very limited representation of minority ethnic or inter-ethnic couples, mature couples, individuals with visible disabilities and same-sex couples across brochures/years. Minority ethnic or inter-ethnic couples featured in a maximum of three images (6.7%) in 2009, 2014, 2017 and 2018. Mature couples were represented in a maximum of six images (13.3%) in 2016, 2018 and 2019. Out of 671 images examined, 660 were heterosexual couples and 11 same-sex couples. The first visible depiction of same-sex couples featured in the 2013 brochure (one image). Only with same-sex couples did the distribution of data across brochures significantly vary, considering 1% significance level ($\chi^2(15) = 39.808$; p-value = 0.001). This variation seems to be due to a statistically significant increase in the depiction of same-sex couples to 6.7% in 2018 ($\chi^2(1) = 7.290$; p-value = 0.007) and 11.1% in 2019 ($\chi^2(1) = 27.040$; p-value = 0.000). The portrayal of couples where at least one partner has a visible disability is totally absent.

Beach-related settings are dominant ($\chi^2(15) = 19.413$, p-value = 0.196) in the promotional brochures under analysis, and this pattern continues across the years/brochures. In 2019, the use of beach backdrops was depicted in 68.9% of the images analysed (Fig. 1).

Discussion

Although a gradual move towards more heterogeneous representations and less stereotyped portrayals of couples, places and weddings may have been expected over the 16-year period due to wider legal changes as well as growing social acceptance of gender equality and homosexuality (Inglehart et al., 2017), the findings from the analysis of 671 images from the 2004–2019 brochures reveal that the first two decades of the 21st century have brought limited change in how wedding imagery is constructed.

First, stereotypical representations of couples are prevalent, with limited change over time. Women remain strongly depicted as dependent on their male counterparts (2019: 37.5%) and are exaggeratedly (through camera angles) portrayed as smaller (relative size) than males. Although statistical variation in data regarding relative size is visible in recent brochures, overall, this type of representation is still used more in relation to women (49.2%) than to men (18.6%). While some reduction can be observed in earlier years (e.g. 2011) in the licensed withdrawal category for women, in newer brochures the stereotypical pattern (e.g. expansive smiles) does not significantly vary, showing a strong presence. This representation is also strong for men, but when comparing the overall presence of this stereotype, this is visibly lower for men (32.6%) than women (60.1%). While there is a slight decrease in the representation of subordination for women, the newer brochures still use this representation in around 20% of images. There are only two categories – feminine touch and body display – where there is a significant decrease in the use of gendered imagery.

For representations of men, there is a very low presence of the categories of feminine touch, subordination and body display. While Chhabra et al. (2011, p. 123) found "a shift in portrayal bias toward men with regard to the feminine touch category", this was not evident in our analysis. Although these representations of men are present, results show that none of the brochures features these in more than 16% of the images. Interestingly, while in early brochures there is no presence of men being depicted as dependent on women, this type of representation can be observed in some recent brochures, indicating less strict gender roles. Nevertheless, none of the brochures depicts men being dependent in more than 15.6% of the images in one single brochure.

Table 4
Representations of minority groups.

Year/category	Minority ethnic or inter-ethnic couple (%)	Mature couple (%)	Same-sex (%)	Disabled (%)
2004	9.1	9.1	0	0
2005	6.1	6.1	0	0
2006	2.8	2.8	0	0
2007	0	2.5	0	0
2008	0	2.2	0	0
2009	6.7	6.7	0	0
2010	4.4	4.4	0	0
2011	0	2.2	0	0
2012	0	2.2	0	0
2013	2.2	0	2.2	0
2014	6.7	0	0	0
2015	4.4	8.9	0	0
2016	0	13.3[2]	2.2	0
2017	6.7	13.3[2]	2.2	0
2018	6.7	8.9	6.7[1]	0
2019	4.4	13.3[2]	11.1[1]	0
Chi-square (*df*)	13.545 (15)	25.651 (15)	39.808 (15)	n/a
p-Value	0.568[3]	0.040	0.001[1,3]	
Minimum expected count	0.85	1.31[2,3]	0.36	n/a
Expected count less than 5	16 cells (50%)	16 cells (50%)	16 cells (50%)	n/a

[1] p-value < 0.01.
[2] p-value < 0.05.
[3] Due to low expected values, an Exact p-value was calculated. Significance of adjusted residuals still shown, but should be treated with caution.

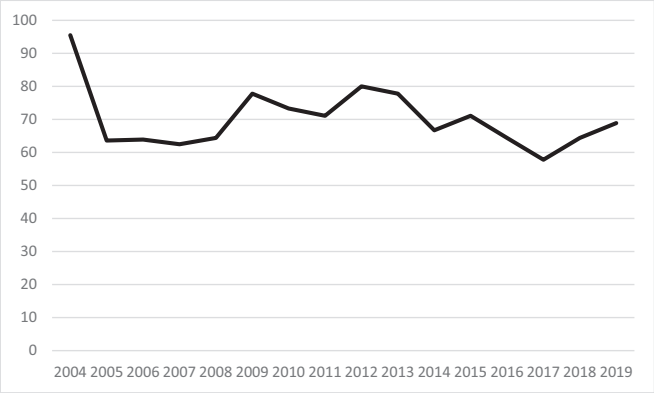

Fig. 1. Beach-related scenes (% presence per year).

Overall, the results show that women are more likely to be stereotyped and portrayed as smaller, subordinate and dependent on their male counterparts. These three categories – relative size, subordination and independence – are particularly important as they refer to power dynamics and gender roles. Compared to earlier research into gendered representations in tourism promotional materials (e.g. Pritchard, 2001; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000), our analysis shows how imagery evolves over a period of time, demonstrating that change in gendered representations is slow and variegated. Stereotypical gender roles remain prevalent throughout, despite wider social changes in relation to gender equality. Such imagery of couples not only reinforces traditional gender norms in relationships but also epitomises conservatism in the symbolic meanings of weddings (Bertella, 2015; Ingraham, 2008).

Second, our intersectional analysis goes beyond gendered representations and shows nuances within portrayals of wedding couples. The predominant imagery is that of young, conventionally attractive, white, able-bodied, heterosexual couples. Portrayals of individuals with visible disabilities are non-existent. The first visible depiction of same-sex couples appears in 2013. In total, only 11 images of same-sex couples were included, which exemplifies the hegemony of heteronormative portrayals in tourism promotional materials (Frohlick & Johnston, 2011; Johnston, 2006;). Despite the legalisation of same-sex marriages in the UK and rise in social acceptance of same-sex relationships, media representations lag behind and continue to be rooted in traditionalist heteronormative imagery. Out of eleven same-sex couples, the majority represented are young female couples (eight in total) on the beach wearing bikinis. Whereas female same-sex couples tend to be depicted informally, in bikinis and revealing white clothes, male couples are always depicted in dark suits, even in beach locations. Additionally, images of same-sex couples are often subtle, understated and ambiguous (e.g. less closeness than with heterosexual couples), which could represent a marketing strategy to mitigate potential negative consumer attitudes towards same-sex couples (Ivory, 2019). In general, same-sex couples are portrayed as of the same size, young and white, with no mature, minority ethnic or inter-ethnic couples represented.

The vast majority of images in the brochures analysed depict white couples. Of the 671 images examined, only 24 were minority ethnic or inter-ethnic couples (some brochures had none). The maximum representation of couples in one single brochure (where at least one partner is of a visible minority ethnic background) is 6.7% of the total of images (three couples). If images of minority ethnic or inter-ethnic couples are included, the couples are young and heterosexual, and generally the images are small in size, not prominent (in the corner or bottom of the page), making these couples difficult to notice and therefore visually marginalising them. In an increasingly diverse British society (ONS, 2012), such selective and unrepresentative portrayals can subtly alienate ethnic minority groups and further reinforce social stereotypes (Buzinde et al., 2006; Klemm, 2002).

Younger couples are also clearly dominant. There is a slight increase in the depiction of mature couples in recent brochures (but only if considered at a 5% significance level), where a maximum of 13.3% was reached (six couples). In total, there were only 40 mature couples depicted, which is surprising considering that mature couples represent a significant wedding tourism market (Mintel, 2011; ONS, 2020a). In addition, the 65+ group is the fastest-growing age group and an increasingly mobile one (ONS, 2019b). These images are predominantly smaller than a quarter of a page, depict the couples sitting down or in a corner of a non-beach-related setting rather than centred in the picture, signalling their marginalisation. If mature couples are featured, they are still conventionally attractive, with signs of ageing only subtly visible. They are always white, able-bodied and heterosexual, highlighting the lack of heterogenous representations and the need for more nuanced images of mature couples, as well as reinforcing the conventional imagery of a wedding couple as youthful.

In addition, children, wedding guests and locals are almost entirely absent. For example, in the 2019 brochure, there are no images portraying couples in the presence of children. This reinforces the depiction of traditional marriage imagery (childfree young couples who wish to start a family), even though remarriages and renewal of vows are key markets for weddings abroad. This emphasis on the centrality of the couple, which results in the absence of others, has been referred to as couple-isation (Carter & Duncan, 2017). It exemplifies modern Western individualism, detraditionalisation and the loosening of family ties (Bauman, 2003). This normalises the departure from the traditional (often simpler) community aspect of weddings to one transformed into a consumerism-driven performance. Additionally, not only are couples featured on their own, the models chosen are also slim and conventionally attractive, fitting within and reinforcing existing societal aspirations of body perfection for the wedding day, in particular for brides. This further

normalises the bridal body ideal so prominent in popular culture and the pressure to "look good" for the wedding day (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008, p. 398).

Finally, weddings are framed as non-religious events. Beach-related locations are dominant, and the pattern does not change between 2004 and 2019. Unlike some (rare) images depicting couples in a heritage and culture scenery, which are directly linked to a particular destination (e.g. Italy), most images feature beaches that are not clearly identifiable as being one destination or another. These portrayals homogenise destinations, reducing their resources to similar-looking beaches and resorts as if the images were constructed using the same standard guidelines designed to make destination differentiation difficult. Where images did not depict a beach setting, landscapes such as the New York City skyline, Disneyworld and Las Vegas wedding chapels were used. Almost all of the other images analysed used paradisiacal white beaches, calm oceans and palm trees to promote destinations such as the Caribbean, the Maldives and Mexico. Such reductive, paradise-like and exotic imagery that is limited to portrayals of deserted beaches and empty beach resorts presents destinations one-dimensionally (Walters & Cassel, 2016), constructing these as a playground for the couple's enactment of secular consumption set in a backdrop of a holiday resort.

Conclusion

On one level, the analysis shows that weddings abroad tourism brochures perpetuate and reproduce hegemonic messages of heteronormativity, reinforce and exacerbate age, ethnicity and body normativity, while largely maintaining gender stereotypes and further entrenching the symbolic meanings of the Western heterosexual wedding. Despite wider legal and societal changes in the UK (e.g. increase of remarriages and older couples, same-sex marriages, rise in inter-ethnic relationships) and the wedding market becoming more diverse, the imagery remains majority-centric and constructed according to conventional notions of masculinity and femininity, with minority groups marginalised and limited change over the 16-year period. On another level, while imagery of couples is homogenous and unreflective of wider societal trends, portrayals of wedding locations communicate the societal shift to secularism, individualism and consumerism (Bauman, 2003; Boden, 2003), where the religious is replaced with secular and where commodified ceremonies are driven by consumerist practices of the experience economy. The wedding event is displaced from a locally-situated community event to a couple-ised experience set in remote luxurious holiday resorts, normalising the disconnection from locality. Tradition is co-opted for commercial means through transporting white heterosexual wedding ideals into exotic contexts, allowing for combining traditionalist values with consumerist desires. Weddings abroad are thus packaged as something traditional yet different.

In nations with high levels of physical and economic security, public attitudes tend to be favourable towards the shift from traditional to secular-rational values and from survival values to self-expression values (Inglehart et al., 2017). However, this can manifest unevenly in different contexts. Despite growing acceptance of gender equality and homosexuality in the UK as well as other social and legal changes, conceptions of weddings nonetheless still paradoxically remain static, rooted in traditional wedding ideals and disconnected from the wider social support of broader changes. Indeed, there has been little change in wedding imagery, underpinned by consumerist practices that reinforce heteronormativity and patriarchal relations as well as being shaped by discourses of retraditionalisation (Boden, 2003; Broekhuizen & Evans, 2016; Ingraham, 2008). As such, constructions of couples and places in wedding abroad brochures intertwine traditional values with consumerism, in this way staging white wedding ideals within a honeymoon experience economy setting. While Western societies have largely normalised secular weddings, what is now needed from the tourism industry is a reimagining of wedding imagery through a lens that challenges inequalities and patriarchal norms, and goes beyond mere commodification.

The study's contribution is threefold. First, it showed that adopting a quantitative intersectional approach (Mcmaster & Cook, 2019) brings highly nuanced analysis across a range of categories and frames. Application of the visibility framework allowed for the scale of power asymmetries, omissions and inequalities in tourism representations to be made visible and showed the potential in conducting more multi-dimensional (and intersectional) rather than single-focus (e.g. exclusively gender) analyses of representations in tourism promotional materials. Second, through longitudinal analysis, the article demonstrated the value of examining changes in representations over time and identifying wider trends, such as how normative representations of couples endure over time in spite of societal changes, and how dominant ideologies remain slow to shift. Third, to show that media imagery is not isolated from broader social reality but is part of it, this paper situated the object of study within its broader socio-cultural context mapped over time. This allowed for further insights into constructions of normativity and wedding imagery within the context of broader societal changes, in this way furthering the body of scholarship on tourism representations (Buzinde et al., 2006; Chhabra et al., 2011; Frohlick & Johnston, 2011; Pritchard, 2001; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000) as well as Western wedding ideals (Boden, 2003; Broekhuizen & Evans, 2016; Carter & Duncan, 2017; Ingraham, 2008).

The results show the need for industry to work towards promotional materials that reframe dominant narratives and offer more inclusive representations of different social groups. While there is an economic argument for making promotional materials more inclusive, we argue that there are wider social justice-related reasons for doing so. Challenging hegemonic imagery in tourism promotional materials should form part of social responsibility for organisations. Accordingly, there are opportunities for adopting a societal-marketing orientation based on a responsible approach to marketing tourism products (Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000) as well as engaging in social marketing initiatives focused on behavioural change (Chhabra et al., 2011). These can be used as vehicles for social change through facilitating acceptance of difference among the majority group, making minority groups feel more represented in advertising and producing promotional materials more reflective of increasing social diversity.

Specifically, our results show the need for tourism agencies to engage in responsible marketing strategies, including staff training aimed at mitigating unconscious bias leading to the perpetuation of stereotypical representations in promotional materials as well as reflecting on recruitment strategies to address the limited diversity in advertising agency staff (IPA, 2017; Simcock & Sudbury, 2006).

If tokenistic embracing and commodifying of inclusivity and diversity that aims to only increase sales and serve public relation goals is avoided, this approach can help challenge the hegemony of white, young, heterosexual and able-bodied couples, and make space for less idealised and more heterogeneous images of couples, weddings as well as destinations.

Brochures (whether digital or printed) remain an important point of reference for a wide sector of the population (Hsu & Song, 2013). As minority groups are increasingly participating in mainstream tourism, yet inequalities persist, there is a need for industry to critically reflect on and move away from stereotyped, gendered and heteronormative images and instead capture the complex, multi-layered and diverse dimensions of the society of today and tomorrow, which reinforces the relevance of the study. Future studies could move beyond brochures of major operators and explore nuances in how social media and user-created imagery provide scope to go beyond stereotyped imagery of weddings and couples or, conversely, whether they reproduce the imagery from traditional media outlets. More qualitative studies that seek to gain insight into the perceptions of consumers of tourism promotional materials are also needed (Rose, 2012), and would provide valuable insights into their attitudes and potential impacts of reductive imagery. Finally, while our study is limited by the codes used as well as its focus on images only, it is hoped that the visibility framework is adapted, with new codes added (e.g. body size), and applied by scholars in future studies to examine representations in other contexts, deconstruct dominant ideologies and make omissions visible.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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