A postcolonial feminist analysis of official tourism representations of Sri Lanka on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

Although postcolonial analyses examining the sexualized imagery of women in tourism have been conducted, previous studies have predominantly focused on gender and (post)colonialism from a patriarchal perspective. By doing so, other (neo)colonial power asymmetries, such as race, class and ethnicity, have often been neglected. This paper mobilises postcolonial feminist theory to expand the existing analyses and discourses concerning gendered representations in tourism. Through a narrative analysis of the images published in the official Instagram page of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Tourism, we contend that the images produced and circulated to promote Sri Lanka in many instances echo essentialist gendered binaries (e.g. men/women; coloniser/colonised; hegemonic/subordinated). However, as the images tend to produce and reiterate Sri Lankan national identity through a hegemonic Sinhalese Buddhist discourse, they also show the intersections between gender and other asymmetries of power (e.g. race, ethnicity, religion, and social class) – in reproducing (post)colonial gendered identities.

1. Introduction

Within tourism promotional material, it is not rare to observe fragments of one culture reinvented and repositioned with new meanings in other cultures and contexts. As potential immanent sites of manifold operations of power, representations of cultures in tourism are multi-axial, and therefore, invaluable sources for anthropological/sociological considerations (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). Importantly, power – alongside lack of power – produces and legitimizes particular images of social realities, which become crystallised and accepted ways of being and seeing through stereotypical images (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2002; Bergmeister, 2015; Chetty, 2011; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). Indeed, as Mellinger (1994) suggests, representations submerge through a political power struggle, and what they include and exclude expose whose interests they serve. As such, since the birth of tourism academic discourse, critical approaches to tourism representations has been instrumental to scrutinise the political frames and conditions underpinning tourism images (see Ateljevic & Doorne, 2002; Bandyopadhyay & Nascimento, 2010; Buzinde, Santos, & Smith, 2006; Crang, 1997; Dann, 1996; Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Kanemasu, 2013; Kinnaird & Hall, 1996), especially as it enables to uncover "the ideologies and practices that structure touristic relations" (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2002, p. 649).

Among the various discourses propelled by critical theorists, the analysis of the orientalist, colonial and imperialist forces informing tourism representations have gradually become the subject of interest by scholars. It has been argued that cultural representations, especially when they concern projections of exotic peoples and non-Western 'Others', provide meaningful opportunities to reflect upon and interrogate the colonial, postcolonial and global transcultural power structures underpinning tourism knowledge and representations from the industry (Khoo-Lattimore, Yang, & Je, 2019; Wijesinghe, Mura, & Bouchon, 2019). Salazar (2012, p. 871) argues that 'the imagery used in tourism to developing countries is about fantasies, and often about an ambivalent nostalgia for the past'. Essentially, as tourism discourses are heavily bounded by Western/Eurocentric values (Mura & Wijesinghe, 2019), tourism representations continue to build upon the colonialist anthropological notion of the 'other' by reiterating century-old depictions of the 'exotic orient' subsumed in 'difference' (Said, 1978).

Importantly, gendered representations in tourism have not transcended these hegemonic colonial values and power structures (Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011). According to Aitchison (2001, p.140), 'feminized, sexualized and racialized imagery can be seen to inform a symbiotic relationship between colonialism and sexism that constantly re-invents itself within the globalized tourism industry'. However, despite theoretical progress in gender analyses, tourism studies have been

largely scrutinized for ignoring critiques of the colonial legacy (including its racial, ethnic, class, age, asymmetries of oppression) and its associations to gendered constructions of othering (Figueroa-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Pérez, Morgan, & Villacé-Molinero, 2015). Analyses examining the sexualized representations of women in tourism from a postcolonial perspective have been conducted (Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). Nonetheless, previous studies have predominantly focused on gender and colonialism from a patriarchal perspective of orientalism. By doing so, the relations to other colonial power asymmetries, such as race, class and ethnicity (among others), have often been neglected. Furthermore, analyses concerning colonial patriarchy and 'othering' in gender representations in tourism have also overlooked the intersection between hegemonic historical ideologies stemming from colonialism and the capitalist and neoliberalist values characterising contemporary society.

This paper mobilises postcolonial feminist theory to expand the existing analyses and discourses concerning gendered representations in tourism. It attempts to go beyond Western feminist analyses of gender and power as mere patriarchal structures. Building upon – and in several instances diverging from – seminal postcolonial theories (see among others S. H. Alatas, 1974; Bhabha, 1994; Memmi, 1968; Said, 1978), postcolonial feminist critics (or authors labelled as such) like Fannon (1965), L. Gandhi (1998), Mohanty (1988),(Mohanty, 1984) Spivak (1990), and Suleri (1992) have questioned Western feminism on its propensity to construct images of non-Western women situated in former colonies as powerless victims. Rather, their critique reasserts the need to reconsider the complexity of colonial and postcolonial relations without overlooking the various forms in which power manifests itself in the multiple masculinities and femininities constituting the (post) coloniser and the (post)colonised.

Also, postcolonial feminist theory attempts to advance gendered analyses by overcoming previously constructed binaries reiterated by structuralist approaches to gender and colonialism (e.g. men/women; coloniser/colonised; hegemonic/subordinated). By doing so, postcolonial feminism paves the way for a more nuanced understanding of gendered identities in contemporary postcolonial societies, which are shaped by both historical (e.g. colonialism) and contemporary events (capitalism, globalisation, neoliberalism). Overall, drawing upon the intersections between poststructuralist, postcolonial and feminist stances, this work responds to Figueroa-Domecq, de Jong, and Williams (2020), who have recently called for multiple combined approaches to feminist inquiry in tourism. More specifically, it needs to be emphasised that integrating different feminist areas and perspectives may produce 'in-depth insights into tourism and gender intersections that cannot be achieved through engagement with any one singular approach' (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2020; p. 2).

Methodologically, this paper employs a narrative analysis to explore the gendered power structures behind the images used to promote Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. More specifically, this work uses the official Instagram page of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Tourism as the context of the analysis by focusing on the images that capture people to understand gender representations in tourism. As the interpretivist paradigm informing this work values reflexivity and positionality in research, we chose Sri Lanka as the study site due to the composition of the research team. The main author of this study is a female Sri Lankan tourism scholar, whose work has focused on tourism knowledge and representation in postcolonial societies. The other two members of the research team – a Western male tourism scholar and a non-Western female tourism academic – have researched different aspects of gender in tourism in non-Western contexts. We believe that the cultural diversity, background and expertise of the authors is crucial to provide emic and etic perspectives concerning gendered tourism representations in Sri Lanka.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Postcolonial theory – An overview

Propelled by Edward Said's publication 'Orientalism' (Said, 1978), the term 'postcolonial theory' encapsulates an array of multiple – and often discordant – theoretical stances concerning 'postcolonialism' and 'postcoloniality'. Scholars labelled as postcolonial critics (e.g. Alatas, 1974; Bhabha, 1994; L. Gandhi, 1998; Fanon, 1965; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1990) have framed the origins and developments of postcolonial theory within diverse philosophical movements and ideologies, including 'humanism', 'imperialism', 'nationalism', 'Marxism', 'poststructuralism', 'neoliberalism', and 'globalisation', among others. The multiplicity of perspectives and approaches to postcolonialism/postcoloniality has generated a fragmented body of knowledge across disciplines, which in turn has sparked debates and disagreements among postcolonial critics and/or scholars labelled as postcolonial. One of the main points of disagreement, for example, concerns the 'cultural audience' of postcolonial theory. Indeed, while the main assumption behind postcolonial critics' work is to give voice to what Spivak (1990) refers to as the 'subaltern' (in this case the colonised situated outside the West), L. Gandhi (1998, p. viii) contends that "postcolonial theory principally addresses the needs of the Western academy".

Perhaps one of the most debated topics among postcolonial theorists refers to the historical period of time in which postcolonialism and postcoloniality should be situated. To refer to 'postcolonialism' as the period immediately after colonialism – namely as 'end of colonialism' – is problematic from at least three different conceptual perspectives. Firstly, while 'postcolonialism' may evoke the end of coloniser-colonised relations, economic, socio-cultural and psychological relations have continued to exist until the current time (see S. H. Alatas, 1974; Memmi, 1968).

Secondly, to regard 'postcolonialism' simply as the aftermath of colonialism implies that the genesis of the condition of 'postcoloniality' should be only traced back to the historical time immediately after the colonisers departed from the colonies. Yet, many theorists argue that postcoloniality needs to be regarded as a condition that began from the time lands were colonised (namely from the arrival of the colonisers rather than from their departure). Thirdly, some critics have contended that postcolonialism as 'end of colonialism' evokes a decolonizing process of fracture with the past, in which anti-colonial/nationalist forces attempted to conceive a future without taking into consideration the historical events of colonial past. In this regard, Bhabha (1994) has reiterated the critical therapeutic role of remembering the past in shaping the present and future identities and national consciousness.

Importantly, Gandhi's (1998) invitation to remember the colonial past also unveils the complex power relations between coloniser and colonised, which were characterized by an ambiguous interplay of seduction and antagonism. As S. H. Alatas (1974) has argued, the physical and political conquest of lands contributed to foster colonies' psychological dependence. However, as power structures are never unidirectional (Foucault, 1972), it needs to be reiterated that encounters between colonisers and colonised produced an intricated scenario in which forms of dependence and subjugation were simultaneously accepted and challenged. Ambivalent and hybrid relations between colonisers and colonised usually produced forms of 'mimicry' of colonisers' cultural and linguistic practices, which can be regarded as forms of both imitation and mockery (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007; Bhabha, 1994). In Bhabha's (1994, p. 86) words, the outcomes of mimicry are "almost the same, but not quite".

An important stream of studies mobilising postcolonial theory explores (post)colonialism as a literary/textual phenomenon. In this respect, critics like Boehmer (1995), Wa Thiong'o (1986), Said (1978) and

Tiffin and Lawson (1994), among others, have debated the crucial role of written texts in producing and maintaining socially constructed representations of colonies and colonisers. As Visvanatham (1989), p. 20) has argued, "the English literary text, functioning as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state, becomes a mask for economic exploitation". Likewise, L. Gandhi (1998, p. 142) has claimed that "texts, more than any other social and political product, it is argued, are the most significant instigators and purveyors of colonial power and its double, postcolonial resistance". Within this frame of inquiry, literary texts represent contested spaces in which discourse about the West and the 'Rest' is produced, negotiated and challenged by both colonial and anti-colonial stances.

Despite the lack of consensus on the tenets of postcolonial theory and the controversies related to the nature and meaning of the 'postcolonial', Ashcroft et al. (2007) have reiterated the relevance of postcolonial analysis in understanding the complex interplay of global, local and neoimperialist/neoliberal forces shaping both post-colonised societies and previous/new colonisers. In their own words, "the field of post-colonial studies has provided useful strategies for a wider field of global analysis" (Ashcroft et al., 2007; p. viii). Within this line of thought, postcolonial theory represents a significant conceptual lens to explore and further scrutinise the complexity of contemporary identities and how they are shaped by past and ongoing power structures (e.g. colonialism, neoliberalism, globalisation, neocolonialism). It also provides an opportunity to re-examine the role of Western thought and Western epistemologies in producing 'knowledges', representing people/places and omitting 'Other' ways of knowing/ 'Other' people.

2.2. Postcolonialism and feminism

The nexus between postcolonial and feminist theories has been a subject of contentious debates among critics since the end of the 1970s. Ashcroft et al. (2007) argue that these two ideological/social/political movements share a similar core agenda as they both aim at challenging socially constructed power structures. More specifically, while postcolonial theory regards colonialism as the source of unbalanced power relations between Western colonisers and non-Western colonised, feminism identifies patriarchy as the cause of men's hegemony and women's subjugation in society. However, both theoretical approaches have attracted criticism by scholars across disciplines (including commentators labelled as feminist and postcolonial) due to their propensity to produce essentialist discourses that only reiterate – rather than challenge – stereotypical binary categories (e.g. colonisers/colonised; men/women; hegemonic/subjugated).

By exploring the node between feminism and postcolonialism, Chandra Mohanty (1988) questions Western feminist thought on non-Western women due to its propensity to produce stereotypical representations of women as homogenous and subjugated. Indeed, Mohanty (1988) criticises sociological portrayals of African women as victims of colonial power (see Cutrufelli, 1983). In her own words, "what is problematical, then, about this kind of use of 'women' as a group, as a stable category of analysis, is that it assumes an ahistorical, universal unity among women based on a generalized notion of their subordination" (Mohanty, 1988; p. 72). Likewise, Gandhi (1998) and Suleri (1992) argue that the process of 'double colonisation' discussed by postcolonial feminists, which refers to non-Western women as oppressed by a double layer of both colonial and patriarchal power structures, only contributes to reinstate perceptions of Indigenous women as victims and marginal subjects and Western white women as heroines. Importantly, this process of victimization of women in the colonies also assumes socially constructed and stereotypical conceptualisations of both 'margins' and 'centre'. In this respect, Western postcolonial feminists' attempt of giving voice to non-Western women has been often criticised as it tends to reassert the centrality of Western thought (and the marginality of non-Western epistemologies) rather than challenge it (Spivak, 1990).

Postcolonial feminist scholars have also questioned debates surrounding non-Western women's embodied representations. In this regard, non-Western women's bodily practices and movements (e.g. wearing the veil, covering parts of the body in public, privileging private spaces) have been often bounded by colonial discourses juxtaposing colonisers' modernity and colonies' primitiveness. Yegenoglu (1998, p. 39), for example, points out that "the most blatant example of the fear of the other and the associated fantasy of penetration is French colonialism's obsession with the woman's veil in Algeria". More specifically, she contends that under French colonialism Algerian women's practice of wearing the veil was perceived as a mask – an act of concealing – and thus contradicted post-Enlightenment Western connotations of modernity and civilisation as transparency. Yegenoglu's (1998) argument follows the work conducted by other seminal postcolonial theorists, such as Fanon (1965), who have discussed Algerian veiled women as the impenetrable object of desire of the European colonial gaze.

Likewise, colonial representations of non-Western women as spatially confined into private spaces contributed to produce seductive accounts by Western colonisers. Perhaps the most significant example of othering non-Western women's spatial movements is represented by the colonial accounts of the harem. Graham-Brown (2003, p. 502) points out that "fantasies about harem life pervaded the Orientalist imagination and did much to cloud understanding of the social, domestic and sexual lives of women in the Middle East". Indeed, harems were portrayed by Orientalist discourse as secluded spaces in which women were represented as passive sexual possessions of men. However, women's experiences and power structures in the harem were more complex and nuanced than the accounts projected by Orientalist discourses (Graham-Brown, 2003).

Despite the heated debates and disagreements underpinning postcolonial feminist stances, Lewis and Mills (2003) discuss the multiple points of contact and possible cooperation between postcolonialism and feminism. Among them, an important aspect concerns the role played by postcolonial thought in reassessing gendered identities and relations under the frame of race, 'whiteness' and racism. As Lewis and Mills (2003) contend, racializing gender – and, importantly, considering how colonialism/postcolonialism has contributed to unequal gendered racial relations between the colonised and the colonisers – could provide a theoretical lens to overcome essentialist dichotomies and pave the way for more nuanced representations of masculinities and femininities.

Moreover, drawing upon the Combahee River Collective's manifesto published in Smith (1983), Lewis and Mills (2003) remind us of the intricate intersections between gender, race and class, which were partly propelled and reiterated by colonial discourse. Based on this line of thought, Rich (2003) contends that gendered power structures should always be conceived as situated. As such, the complex dynamics of race, class, religion and sexuality represent frames that should be employed to reconsider gendered selves in colonial/postcolonial history (Gilman, 1985). From this perspective, it is also important to emphasise that the intersection between gender, race, class, sexuality and religion produced unequal relations not only between the coloniser and the colonised but also within the colonised. As discussed in the following section, in former colonies like Sri Lanka, substantial power differences existed among the members of the colonised society according to race, ethnicity, class, and religion.

Despite the theoretical progress in gender inquiry, tourism studies have afforded few critiques on the colonial legacy of gender construction where postcolonial feminist perspectives are applied (Aitchison, 2001). Bandyopadhyay and Patil (2017), for instance, note that Global North volunteer tourists (of which many are women from Western countries) aid to reproduce colonial and gendered constructions of 'othering' where white/western women are portrayed as saving the women of the colonies from their wretched societies. In these instances, the colonised are not only ascribed as people of the Third World who need the Global North to reach civilisation but also as women in need of

being rescued by their backward masculine structures of society. Aitchison (2001) refers to this as the 'other others', where women at first are the 'other' when man is subject, but women outside of the hegemonic places are subscribed to further levels of othering based on the colonial logic. Extending this further, Bandyopadhyay (2019) presents a similar imperial/racial attitude of white volunteer tourists where a sense of racially (colonially ascribed) fuelled 'duty' exists to rescue the Global South- the 'white man's and woman's burden'. These studies remind us that gender cannot be studied monolithically, as it is intricately woven within the specific historical politics of place/location, which western feminism often disregards. Indeed, like Foley, Grabowski, Small, and Wearing (2018) reiterate, as women's empowerment and female experiences cannot be universalised, feminism cannot be reduced to a single discourse of emancipation. Thus, postcolonial feminism helps to recognise the multiple identities of participants in understanding their lived experiences, which are shaped by structural and social dimensions (Chambers & Watkins, 2012).

2.3. Sri Lanka: Nationalist history, gender identities and tourism

Despite the evidence of human colonisation in Sri Lanka 34,000 years ago, popular Sinhalese nationalistic discourses of the island nation remain bound to ethnocentric, ethnic and religious inequalities experienced during the 443 years of European colonialism. The European colonisation of Sri Lanka, which began with the Portuguese (1505–1658) and was followed by the Dutch (1658–1796) and later by the British (1796–1948), significantly changed the socio-demographic profile of the state by granting a privileged position to the newly baptised Christian (English speaking) minority. Under the British rule, and its 'divide and rule' strategy, disproportionate benefits were provided to the island's minorities (i.e. Tamils, Christians) in the realms of civil administration, education, armed forces, and professional bodies (De Votta, 2007).

Consequently, the mass nationalism that developed upon independence reflected a desire of the Sinhalese-speaking, Buddhist masses, to be 'accorded their rightful place as the majority of the island's population, which they felt were denied under the colonial role' (Kearney, 1964, p.125). Indeed, while the British agreed to protect the interests of the Buddhist majority, later objectives of missionary works led to the vilification of Sinhalese-Buddhist culture (De Votta, 2007). Thus, upon independence the 'Sri Lanka for the Sinhalese-Buddhist' discourse privileged 'Sinhala Buddhist superordination' (De Votta, 2007). The nationalist discourse utilised Buddhist mytho-history (i.e. the Vijaya myth) to institutionalise this narrative and later placed discriminatory linguistic (Sinhala as the official language), educational (i.e. a quota system) and economic policies that favoured the interests of the majority as a path to eliminate the remnants of colonialism (Obeyesekere, 1997). This led to conflict among the two main ethnic groups (Sinhalese and Tamil) of the newly organised nation-state, a civil war that lasted for over two decades (Kravanja, 2012).

While the discourse of the 'original inhabitants' of the island includes many theories, the 'Veddas' are known to be the most indigenous/native to the island of Sri Lanka. Later settlements (although the timing of these settlements is a matter lacking scholarly consensus) led to the presence of the Sinhalese (with the arrival of Prince Vijaya in 5th century BCE from Indian mainland), and the Sri Lankan Tamils (with the creation of the Tamil/Jaffna Kingdom in 7th century BCE) (Lanka et al., 2014). Both ethnic groups, as per anthropological and archaeological evidence, are known to have a very long history in Sri Lanka, while the timing of this history varies in different accounts. The Sinhalese (predominantly Buddhist who speak Sinhala and affiliated with North Indian Prakit, a branch of Indo-European language family) are known to be an Indo Aryan ethnic group. They form 74.9% of the nation's population and are scattered in the island's Northern Central, Central, Southern and Western regions. The Sri Lankan Tamils (who speak Tamil, a language of the Dravidian family, and profess Hinduism)

constitute 13% of the total population and are concentrated in the Northern and Eastern areas of Sri Lanka (Department of Census and Statistics, 2020). However, due to rising tensions and discrimination, the majority of the Sri Lankan Tamils left the country and migrated to other places, predominantly in Europe, North America, Australia and India, as refugees. The same discriminatory reality led to the rise of Tamil nationalism and a proposal for an independent state for Tamils in Sri Lanka in areas where the Tamil population is a majority (The Northern and Eastern areas).

In contemporary times, the Sinhala-Buddhist discourse permeates all realms of the Sri Lankan narrative, in the government and society alike. The discourses concerning gender identities are no exception as they are heavily bound to colonial and later nationalist ideologies. Historical accounts and texts referring to the gender reality (Buddhist discourses) in Sri Lanka during the pre-colonial eras emphasise the equality of roles and respect that were enjoyed by both sexes (see Harris, 1997). Buddhist nuns (Bhikkhuni), for instance, travelled overseas to communicate the word of Buddha. Records from the Kandyan Law (the Central Kingdom of Kandy, which remained independent during the Portuguese and Dutch invasion, but later fell into the hands of the British), and Pali texts of the Fourfold Society, indicate that women held independent and equal positions to men in society, including (and not limited to) the right to dissolve a marriage and property ownership (Harris, 1997). While certain beliefs, such as Buddha's realistic articulation of women's woes (i.e. childbirth, menses) were interpreted at some point as 'being born a woman is a bad karma', liberal traditions continued at large (in certain cultural subsects if not all). Indeed, as Devaraja (1981) reiterates, women in Buddhist societies, like in pre-colonial Sri Lanka, were held in great respect, which challenges the stereotypical representations of the oppressed South Asian woman often embedded in the discourses of western feminism.

However, the prolonged colonial occupation bought upon significant changes to the ideals of womanhood and family (i.e. marriage, divorce, rights, women's work, gender relations, and sexual morality) as per the Catholic/Christian value system (Marecek, 2012; Yalman, 1967). 'European missionaries brought religions that demanded monogamy, forbade sexual unions, and childbirth outside of marriage, and insisted that marriage was lifelong with divorce regulated by the courts' (Marecek, 2012; p.142). Later, during the anti-colonial struggle, these imprinted traditions of Western ideals (including the foreign ruler's political values, moralities, and gender ideologies) became the cornerstone ideology of the righteous Sinhala womanhood- a direct result of the western educated, urbanised local elite who led such narratives (De Alwis, 2000; Jayawardena, 1993).

Ironically, the call for 'traditional' discourses in the 'nationalist way forward' was not historically rooted in the pre-colonial gender realities of the nation, but rather in the colonial one. Under the new national identity, the 'Sinhala woman' had to uphold the national culture, indigenous religion and family traditions within a subordinate social position (De Alwis, 2000). As Dharmapala (one of the major nationalist anti-colonial 'heroes' of the country) and many other nationalists insisted, 'the proper model of righteous and respectable womanhood was the woman who served her family's needs, who practised modesty and subservience, and who confined herself to the home' (Marecek, 2012, p.152). Female identities hence became attached to the private sphere, while the male ones to the public sphere. Indeed, as Samarasinghe (2012) reiterates, patriarchal nationalism conferred upon women a new social responsibility, an honour as 'mothers of the nation'. While in contemporary Sri Lanka women advance in many realms, including education, the 'righteous Sinhala woman' discourse still permeates all realms of the social structure.

Another aspect of Sri Lanka that has greatly been influenced by its colonial history is the tourism industry. Much like other newly independent nations during the post-colonial era, Sri Lanka recognized the potential of tourism as a modern economic driver supporting developmental needs. Tourism then was depicted as the 'ultimate cure for

all', including unemployment, wealth distribution, international tolerance and even peace (Watkins, 2015). However, hidden beneath this glorious narrative was the dominance of western influence on the post-colonial economies, especially as it relied on western revenues and stakeholders (Crick, 1994). Consequently, as Kravanja (2012) points out, developmental plans in the nation during its post-independence era (after 1948) were heavily subsumed in old colonial juxtapositions between 'the west and the rest'. Part of the reason is that the country's first tourism plan was established under the influence of the United States Agency of International Development (USAID), focused primarily on foreign aid, foreign capital/investment and foreign exchange (Crick, 1994). In turn, tourism in Sri Lanka was developed as per the needs of the wealthy western tourist seeking an 'exotic' and 'paradise-like' holiday in an Asian setting. However, it should be noted that as per the 'Tourist arrival report 2019', India stands as the top (19%) market for Sri Lanka in terms of arrivals, followed by the United Kingdom (10%), China (9%), Germany (7%), Australia (5%), France (5%), the Russian Federation (5%), the United States (4%), Maldives (3%), and Canada (2%) (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2020).

While the industry came to a somewhat halt during the 26 years civil unrest, which ended in 2009, and further during the 2004 tsunami when tourist infrastructure was gravely damaged, the Sri Lankan government strategically managed to revive the tourism industry (dependent heavily on foreign tourism investment). This was drawn into the Tourism Development Strategy 2011–2016 (and later the 2017–2020 plan), with a new and massive marketing campaign under the tourism branding slogan 'Sri Lanka- the wonder of Asia' to attract international tourists (Fernando, Bandara, & Smith, 2017). The 'true Asia' label undoubtedly is constructed with an oriental flavour (unchanged, unrestrained and uncivilized- see Echtner & Prasad, 2003) that continues to mimic colonial race relations to cater to the 'western' tourist seeking an authentic experience in paradise (Mendis, 1981).

3. Methodology

The term "narrative analysis" denotes a group of techniques that focus on the study of texts and other forms of storied representations of realities. Narratives can take various forms, including written, oral or visual (Mura & Sharif, 2017). Rather than simply analysing texts, narrative analysis also dissects the sociological background that leads to the activation, production, organisation and transmission of narratives (Mura & Sharif, 2017). By doing so, this methodological approach can unveil the social meanings behind people's stories, however they are presented and for whatever reason.

While narrative analysis has traditionally been applied to texts, visual narrative analysis is an increasingly important tool in a progressively digitalised world in which sharing images has increased almost beyond measure on social media (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram). Visual analysis has gained momentum in the social sciences as images allow us to make statements about individual and social narratives that verbal accounts cannot fully encompass (Hunter, 2017; Tiidenberg, 2015). Images, as Speidel (2013) reiterates, represent important platforms to tell stories. Although its importance has been recognized in certain subsectors of the social sciences, such as journalism, psychology and communication studies, the potential of visual narrative analysis in exploring realities remains relatively underestimated in tourism (Mura & Sharif, 2017; Scarles, 2010).

We share the view that photographs are pivotal to explore human experiences and feelings in tourism as they tell stories about people and places (Hunter, 2013; Kim, 2010). Based on this premise, this study employs photos to explore gendered representations. This study differs from previous work employing narrative analysis due to its focus on visual forms. Mura and Sharif (2017) calculated that fewer than one in four papers by tourism scholars employing narrative analysis paid any

attention to photos, videos or images, while the rest concentrated solely on texts. Also, most papers sourced data through interviews, while narrative analysis of online material was relatively scarce.
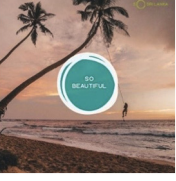
This research selected the official Instagram page of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Tourism as the field of study. This platform started posting and promoting visual material on the 7th of January 2016, and as of now (July 2020), it has posted more than 1425 videos and photos, predominantly in English, while posts in German appear in a few instances. The page has 40,200 followers in total, with a majority constituted by Sri Lankans (based on the main author's observation of names). The page was observed to be active with an average of 3–4 posts per week. However, engagement was limited to fewer comments from visitors with no particular interaction between the tourism organisation and the visitors. In terms of likes per post, the average stood at 900, with the highest number of likes at 82,998 (a picture posted on the 12th of April 2019, capturing a foreign female on a mountain top, sitting on the edge of a rock overlooking a valley) and the lowest at 15 (a pictured posted on the 17th of November 2016, capturing a group of three foreigners dressed in skydiving attire).

The data collection was conducted on the 21st of February 2020, at which time the total posts on the Instagram page were 1223. Since the focus of this study is on gendered representations, only images that include people were selected. A total of 284 photos posted from January 2016 to February 2020 were identified after deleting duplications. Besides focusing on the photographs published on Instagram, captions, dates, the number of likes, and hashtags related to the images were also collected and analysed. The empirical material was classified into two general categories (local and foreign representation) and three subcategories (man only, woman only and group photos). The majority of the photos fell under the category of 'foreign women only' ($n = 72$), while 'local women only' ($n = 13$) had the lowest representation. However, among the 'men only' categories, the number of images representing 'local men' ($n = 49$) were slightly higher than 'foreign men' ($n = 34$). There were 30 photos categorised as 'foreign group'. In contrast, the number of images portraying 'local groups' was much lower ($n = 16$). The last category labelled as the 'mixed local and foreign group', contained 42 photos.

In analysing the images, we used a thematic visual narrative approach by focusing on how gender has been storied and why. More specifically, we paid attention to three interconnected sites in visual narrative analysis, as suggested by Riessman (2003): the production of an image (how, when, why and by whom the image was produced), the image itself (the meaning it suggests, composition and other technological aspects), and its audiencing (the textual viewing guide). The analysis involved three phases. First, the photos and the captions were analysed separately to understand the general narrative behind the promotional materials. In the second phase, each photo was analysed – along with the captions and hashtags – to understand the narrative it attempted to portray. A few themes emerged through symbols and repeated words. While the first and second steps of the analysis were conducted individually by each author, the third phase involved discussions between all three authors. Etic and emic perspectives were evaluated and combined for the development of common narrative themes.

The rationale behind the paper's methodological choices lies in the belief of interpretivism as main paradigmatic guide. Furthermore, as we believe that our way of seeing is highly organised within a specific cultural and neural conditioning (Barthes, 1984), it was necessary to code individually and discuss collectively since all three authors come from varying cultural contexts. This process of analysis and comparison also allowed us to ensure the trustworthiness of the narrative theming process (see Willer et al., 2018). Overall, the analysis led to the identification of three main themes and several sub-themes upon reaching consensus.

Table 1
Nature and paradise.

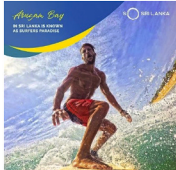| Photo	Caption
	Pristine beauty at it's best at the gorgeous Marble Beach. Witness a sandy wonderland at the number one tourism destination in the world. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel #VisitSriLanka Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	Glorious landscapes and explosions of color in the sky and on the ground as you wander along our untrodden ways. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel #VisitSriLanka #SoScenic Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	Enjoy a beautiful sunrise. Lie down on a hammock. Walk on an empty beach in Dickwela. Looking for peace and quiet? Welcome to #Dickwela. Visit sosrilanka.in for more info. #SriLanka #SoSriLanka #VisitSriLanka #SoBeautiful #Seafood #Beach
	Chase waterfalls and witness the crashing waters of these beautiful giants. Experience nature like never before at the Pearl of the Indian Ocean. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel #DiyalumaFalls #VisitSriLanka #Waterfalls Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	A game of volleyball by the beach with your friends or family is the perfect way to end your evening. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #Volleyball #BestPlaceToTravel #SoScenic #VisitSriLanka Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	Hiking along steep mountain paths. Trekking to discover that perfect sunset point. Or just learning to be with yourself. Polonnaruwa promises to change your life. See for yourself. It's like nothing else. Visit https://www.sosrilanka.in for more info #SriLanka #SoSriLanka #VisitSriLanka #Polonnaruwa #SoMagnificent #Trekking #Hiking

Table 2
Adventure and thrill.

Photo	Caption
	The perfect adventure destination awaits for all the thrill seekers out there at the number one tourist destination in the world. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel #VisitSriLanka #Thrills Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	A surfer's paradise like no other to satisfy the adrenaline junkie in you. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel #VisitSriLanka #Arugambay Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	Adventure at every turn awaits you in Sri Lanka, your number one tourist destination in the world. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel #VisitSriLanka #SoAdventurous Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/

4. Results

4.1. The rich and adventurous leisure class

"Pristine beauty", "Wonderland", "Glorious Landscapes", "Nature never like before", "Green", "Clean". These are few of the representative visual and written texts (photos, captions, hashtags) employed to describe Sri Lanka. Uncontaminated rural settings and wild beaches with palm trees evoke paradisiac portrayals in which Western tourists can enjoy natural beauties in solitude and without the presence of other tourists (see Table 1). In these images, any form of representation suggesting mass tourism (crowds, unfamiliar faces) is absent. Only family members and close friends are present to convey the exclusivity and intimacy of the experience.

Sri Lanka, however, is not a paradise where only relaxation is offered to Western tourists. Rather, "adventure", "thrill", "water-related activities" (e.g. surfing, boating) and "exciting experiences" frequently appear in the images and texts (see Table 2). Juxtaposed to the

boredom of mundane routines in the urban environments of the West, Sri Lanka is presented as a hectic el dorado, where tourists can finally satiate their thirst for adventure and bodily activation. Interestingly, only Western white tourists seem to be busy in partaking in thrill-seeking experiences.

The consumption of tourism is represented as the exclusive dominion of the leisure class, which is mainly portrayed as 'western tourists'. Their supposed 'richness' is represented through body symbols, such as complexion (fairness), and body type. A specific body type, which firmly mirrors the dominant media narratives of a sexualised 'ideal' body, emerges clearly. Other body types, which do not align with the 'ideal beach body' (for both men and women), are never accommodated in the images unless local bodies are portrayed (see Fig. 1 & 2). Furthermore, when the body appears in leisurely representations, it largely evokes youth. Older consumers are rarely portrayed.

Although domestic tourism is a major phenomenon in Sri Lanka, no local population is captured as enjoying or engaging in tourism activities. Where pictures of local and foreign encounters appear, the former perform roles of service providers, such as masseuses, tour guides, drivers, entertainers or butlers. At the domestic level, within these service roles, men appear in frontline work, such as tour guiding. Although Asian travellers are on the rise, their visibility as consumers is underrepresented. Where the western tourist appears, the backdrops cling to old-world ideas of the east as filled with culture and pristine untouched nature – landscapes that are available for the rich and privileged to 'discover' (see Table 1 & 2).

4.2. The cultural and religious labour class

In the narratives presented, the locals are either represented as relatively immobile and free from daily routines and jobs or engaged in cultural, religious and spiritual activities. In this regard, images evoking spirituality are often associated with religious ceremonies and worshipping places, mainly Buddhist rituals and temples (see Table 3).

In the several instances where locals engage in labour activities, mostly working in tea plantations, they appear as "smiling faces" and friendly (see Table 4). Importantly, textual markers like "Ceylon tea" and signs translated in English and German remind us of the targeted audience (namely Western tourists) of these messages.

Fig. 1. The local in representation.

In terms of gendered representations, it is interesting to note how female tourists and locals differ in the way they are presented in the images and texts. In this regard, female tourists – represented as young, blonde, fit, drinking, wearing bathing suits and not overly dressed – embody a type of femininity distant from that showcased by local women – pictured as primitive, covered, veiled, religious, engaging in pre-industrial labour, working the land (see Table 5).

Likewise, while male tourists (mostly Westerners) are represented as adventure seekers, modern, and with a fond interest in understanding traditional culture, local men are often represented as traditional and rural, engaging in activities like fishery and agriculture (see Table 6). Local men are also shepherds, street food vendors, butlers, traditional Kandian dances, close to wild animals (e.g. elephants) and partaking in cultural activities perceived as prestigious in the local context (e.g. carrying the sacred tooth in the Sri Dalada Maligawa or the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in the city of Kandy).

Importantly, gendered representations cannot be disentangled from ethnic and religious identities. In this respect, in most of the images masculine and feminine identities are connected to Buddhism as most of the pictures portraying culture are related to markers and sights of significance to Buddhists (see Table 3). Moreover, Tamils are often represented as state workers, especially female workers.

4.3. Out of sight

As local Sri Lankans form the backstage of the tourism narrative, it is important to highlight the absence of certain locals in the promotional material. While cultural/religious representations contain locals, they also mirror the country's nationalist discourse in the inclusion (and exclusion) of 'selected locals'. Sinhala-Buddhist activities are celebrated and elongated as 'tradition' and 'culture', while the minorities including the Muslims, Catholics, Hindu's, indigenous people, and Tamils (among many other minority groups) are not part of the representation at all (see Fig. 1). The racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of the nation remains absent. The representation remains predominantly focused on Buddhist spirituality and Sinhalese hospitality. While the locals' life is often associated with Buddhism and the Sinhalese, Christians (racially/ethnically Sinhalese) are also blocked from view. While colonial architecture and history are celebrated, perhaps to entice the western tourist with nostalgic memory, the remnants of colonialism, including Christian architecture and people, remain absent.

The two major ethnic groups of the island nation, the Sinhalese and Tamil, are rarely portrayed together. Similarly, neither religious/cultural groups nor gender groups are seen together (see Fig. 1), unless in religious or official tourism event settings (mostly sites for the

Fig. 2. Touristic representation.

Table 3
Culture & Religion.

Photo	Caption
	Witness the explosion of music and dance as the Kandyan dancers present an unforgettable experience for you in Sri Lanka, the world's number one tourist destination. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #KandyanDancers #VisitSriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	Let the Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya show and bestow a serene spirituality that will keep you mesmerized! #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #KelaniyaVihara #VisitSriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	Dance Team #visitsrilanka #dance #srilanka

Table 4
Tea plantation & labourers.

Photo	Caption
	Discover the smiling faces behind some of the world's best handpicked tea. #VisitSriLanka #tea #plantations #green #lush #mountains #Instaview #ThePerfectCup Photo credit: @crewforshoots
	Despite its fame as a resplendent island and a leading tourist destination, the secret of Sri Lanka's attraction lies with its people. #srilankainmyeyes #srilanka #culture
	Ceylon Tea #VisitSriLanka #Ceylontea Ceylon Tea the best in the world.

bourgeoisie). While the western male/female realities are captured with modern romanticist ideas (i.e. candlelight dinners, walks on the beach), the same does not apply to the locals. The western tourist is represented as more fluid, unburdened by traditional gender roles (see Table 1 & 2). In contrast, local men and women have their assumed role symbolized through religious architecture, setting and attire. Moreover, the two and half decade civil unrest and its remnants are hidden from view as well. While religious and ethnic unrest is a continuous reality in modern Sri Lanka, people and spaces are captured in the images as peaceful and harmonious.

'Tamil' identity is predominantly represented in the backdrop of tea industry labour (see Table 4), a narrative that further depicts the national idea that Tamils were brought by the British for indentured labour. Although in reality the circumstances they experience include harsh conditions of work and low salaries, they are often captured with a smile, which evoke the idea that their happiness depends on industrious labour they have to perform. Other aspects of the life of the Tamil minority, which also includes some of the wealthiest people in the nation, are omitted. Furthermore, while women (the wives of men who were brought as labourers) only later entered the tea-estate work, they are only captured in this role in the pictures.

Table 5
Female gender representation.

Photo	Caption
	Die Insel des Tees erwartet dich: Sri Lankas Hochebenen sind nicht nur ein wunderschönes Fotomotiv, sondern liefern uns auch intensiv aromatische Teeblätter. Liebhaber des Aufgussgetränks zieht es in die Provinzen Dimbula, Uva und Nuwara Eliya – dort wird der weltbekannte Ceylon-Tee in seiner besten Qualität angebaut. #sosrilanka #visitsrilanka #tee #teeplantage #urlaub #srilanka
	SLTPB Visiting Blogger Program geared up for aggressive social media promotion in 2018 with World's Top Travel influencers #visitsrilanka
	From our white sandy beaches to our endless green mountains, we really do have it all! #VisitSriLanka #Ella #Mountains #Scenery #Beautiful Thanks for this gorgeous picture @kyklamash
	An adrenaline filled adventure at every turn for the thrill seekers out there who visit Sri Lanka, the world's number one tourism destination. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #VisitSriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel #Thrill Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/

Table 6
Male gender representation.

Photo	Caption
	Independence Square #VisitSriLanka #cultural #heritage #independencesquare
	Catch some amazing waves as you feed your inner adrenaline junkie in Sri Lanka, the number one tourist destination in the world. #SoSriLanka #SriLanka #BestPlaceToTravel #BreathTakingViews #VisitSriLanka Visit: http://www.srilanka.travel/
	Auf Sri Lanka kommst du ins Schwitzen – und nicht nur wegen den ganzjährig tropischen Temperaturen. Die Singhalesen lieben ihr Essen scharf. Die verschiedenen Curry-Gerichte der Insel werden mit üppigen Gewürzmischungen und feurigen Chili-Pasten zubereitet. Aber keine Sorge, wenn dein Mund in Flammen steht, hilft ein kühler Schluck aus einer frisch gepflückten sri-lankischen Trinkkokosnuss. Erfahre jetzt mehr auf www.sosrilanka.de #visitsrilanka #sosrilanka #srilanka #streetfood
	Think you have good balance? Try competing with these Sri Lankan fishermen on stilts! #visitsrilanka #stiltfishing #fishing #beach #beachside #mirissabeach #downsouth #Tradirionalfishing #srilanka #people

In essence, the general life of both local men and women consists of work activities (especially pre-industrious labour) or religious ceremonies. Consequently, happiness for the local (with smiling faces) is associated with working and performing religious/traditional lived experiences, while it is captured through exploration and discovery in leisure activities for western tourists. There is an absence of representation in terms of the other lived experiences of women and men in Sri Lanka, including both pre-modern and modern realities. Importantly, this reiterates the exclusion of backdrops entailing global discourses of 'development' and urban 'modernity'.

5. Discussion

Undoubtedly, one of the most ubiquitous and dominant narratives emerging from our analysis represents Sri Lanka as a natural and pristine environment, a tropical paradise that allows tourists to experience adventure, nature and relaxation simultaneously. These signifiers represent a colonial legacy where certain landscapes are "preserved by time to be explored, exploited, in their natural state" (Aitchison, 2001, p.137). This emergent narrative is not new in tourism as destination marketing strategies have traditionally been based on socially constructed myths grounded on the 'exotic other' (non-Western peoples), non-urban spaces (e.g. the beach) and specific items (e.g. the palm tree, the coconut, the sun, the sea), which are usually part of Westerners' fantasies alongside medieval Christian perceptions of small islands as paradise (Dann, 1996; Kravanja, 2012; Löfgren, 1999; Selwyn, 1996). It needs to be reiterated that this dominant narrative contributes to embed peoples and places into stereotypical and politically selected 'packages' for tourist consumption (Mac Cannell, 1976), which have implications on the individual and national identities of those represented (E. Cohen, 1977).

C. B. Cohen (1995, p. 409) warns us of the dangers underpinning the

production of pristine environments as this process 'obliterates any sense of an active past by constituting its residents and its activities as yet undiscovered, unknown'. In the case of the images and captions analysed, the emphasis placed on representations of nature and 'primitive others' tends to 'minimise' or 'simplify' centuries of Sri Lankan history. Indeed, the island is mostly depicted as a virgin land untouched by civilisation and urbanisation, which is a partial and biased representation of Sri Lanka. Importantly, when certain historical events and items are incorporated in the visual promotional material and texts, they mostly refer to preferred/selected views, namely a colonial past in which local workers are situated in tea plantations. In this respect, not only do the images and captions analysed inform us of the power of tourist representation in forgetting, negotiating, rewriting and reinventing history (Cohen, 1995; Walton, 2005). They also remind us that 'the presence of colonial discourse in travel fantasy is prominent throughout the postcolonial world' (Hall & Tucker, 2004, p. 185).

Within this scenario, an analysis of gendered representations in the images selected for this study also evokes colonial and postcolonial power structures. This is particularly evident if the corporeality of the female 'bodies' displayed in the pictures is referred to. Indeed, while female Westerners' bodies are portrayed as what society constructs as 'ideal bodies' – namely young, athletic, fit, healthy, relatively uncovered and seductive – 'Other' female bodies (mostly local Sri Lankan women) always appear as covered, rather old, and in general not showing any form of seductive appeal or behaviour. Such a dichotomy is also prominent in the types of activities female bodies engage in alongside the spaces in which they are located. In this regard, Western female bodies are represented as highly mobile, free, active and partaking in leisure/tourist activities (e.g. surfing, backpacking, drinking,

sun tanning) in leisure spaces (e.g. the beach). In contrast, non-Western female bodies are rather immobile, involved in non-leisure activities (e.g. working or engaged in cultural/spiritual activities), intended to satisfy the Western gaze (e.g. smiling and serving tourists) and situated in specific spaces (e.g. tea plantations). The construction of men and women of the south as 'underdeveloped', 'third world', or 'developing', is further reiterated by placing the locals within these representations (Mohanty, 1988).

Postcolonial feminist stances have often questioned the essentialist binaries produced by some Western feminist scholars, which has tended to portray non-Western women's female bodies in contrast to Western women's free/public bodies. According to scholars like Mohanty (1988), Spivak (1990), Suleri (1992) and Trinh (1989), not only does this juxtaposition simplify the heterogeneity of 'Other' women. It also contributes to produce representations of non-Western women as victims and powerless individuals. As such, postcolonial feminist thought has attempted to challenge the 'double colonisation' stance discussed by Western feminists, namely the idea that non-Western women are subject to multiple layers of subjugation due to patriarchal and imperialist power structures (Gandhi, 1998). Nevertheless, the images produced and circulated to promote Sri Lanka in many instances echo essentialist gendered representations of the colonised. Overall, drawing upon Hall and Tucker (2004, p. 185), who remind us of 'the presence of colonial discourse in travel fantasy', our analysis further reaffirms the presence of gendered colonial discourse in travel fantasy.

However, while dichotomist representations inscribed with colonial ideas remain a dominant narrative in which "host societies are differentiated by race/ethnicity, colonial past or social position from the consumer societies" (Aitchison, 2001, p.140), the images also narrate a subtle anti-colonial/nationalist sentiment. The celebration of Buddhist history, traditions, festivities, attire, and architecture is an indication of the government's role in producing national identity. Importantly, the Sinhalese Buddhist hegemonic discourse produced represents an important symbol of Sri Lanka's anti-colonial struggle (De Votta, 2007). The 'Kandyan dancers' that appear in most pictures of the Instagram page embody one of the key visual symbols of national identity in Sri Lanka (Reed, 2002). Similarly, the sari/osari-clad female (against the pant suited local men) in official settings also depicts the national narrative of women being the guardians of 'tradition' (Sinhala) and 'religion' (Buddhist) of the post-colonial nationhood. Dharmapala, for instance, argued that the sari signified modesty and tradition and marked the woman as Sinhala by her outward appearance (Marecek, 2012). Interestingly, in both settings (local and western depictions), gender is represented beyond the 'patriarchal' ideas of masculine (public) and feminine (private) spaces and realities.

While anti-colonial nationalist responses entailed gendered segregation (De Alwis, 2000), local women's presence (although limited) in service roles, labour market, and as officials of the local tourism industry, provides new meanings in the 'modern-traditional' struggle. The educated and enlightened 'new woman' now crosses 'traditional' boundaries and participates in the public sphere, her placement is not a full negation of traditional culture. Her attire, for instance, remains as an acknowledgement of national culture (Jayawardena, 1993). The western feminist perspective reiterates the 'covered body' of 'other' women or religious engagement as symbols of supposed backwardness, subordination or oppression. However, under the national discourse, women's 'covered body' plays an important role in conveying the anti-colonial struggle alongside a devotion to safeguard the historic root and tradition of the place. It does not represent a form of oppression, as western feminism insists, but a form of liberation in which 'traditional' and 'national' ways of life resist western homogenization and ideas of 'neo-colonial liberation and globalisation'. As Patil (2011) points out, this could be identified as an emblematic form of resistance. Additionally, whereas previous studies claim that 'other' men and women are often sexualized in tourism representations of the 'orient', our

analysis points to western tourists' bodily representations as sexualized, a form of 'reverse gaze'.

Simultaneously, as our analysis reveals that gendered inequalities are not simply colonial in nature but multilayered, it allows us to move beyond the dichotomous west/east or male/female narrative and to have a better understanding of local power dynamics (Buzinde et al., 2006). In this setting, resistance to colonialism, which contributed to the rise of postcolonial Sinhala-Buddhist masculine nationalism, marginalizes the minorities of Sri Lanka and removes them from the dominant narrative. At large, these minorities include the ethnic, racial, and religious 'other'. Beyond the argument of majority/minority representation, class differences seem to transcend racial segregation as the urban/educated/middle/upper-class Sinhala identity is projected differently from that of the labour/lower classes (Mohanty, 1988). Gender can thus be viewed as one of the core elements in the (neo) colonial global (west/east) and postcolonial local (ethnic/racial/class and religious-based) power struggle (De Alwis, 2000).

6. Conclusion

"In a world where tourism is a globalized industry dominated by former colonial powers, can the subaltern speak?" (Aitchison, 2001, p.141).

Essentially, relations between people, at both the local and global levels, are subjected to gendered ideologies (Swain, 1995). However, in this study, the narrative analysis of the official Sri Lankan tourism Instagram site indicates that gendered representations should not only be framed within patriarchal structures, as western feminism suggests. Rather, the images employed as promotional material embed multiple and complex asymmetries of power, which do not transcend race, ethnicity, religion, and class. They are also representative of the historical and social circumstances of the specific places in which they are situated and the changes propelled by global and local forces (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2019; Mohanty, 1988). In particular, although the globalized tourism industry remains dominated by the ideologies of former colonial powers, representation remains a space of negotiation between local/global needs and the values of the industry.

In this scenario, finding a balance between the colonial/neo-colonial capitalist structures and the forces shaping post-colonial national identity is an ongoing challenge. Consumerist tourism culture globally requires postcolonial states (and their media) to promote themselves in ways that often subjugate them to the colonial gaze (Bandyopadhyay & Nascimento, 2010). This is particularly true within the superstructures of the capitalist system, in which the needs of the 'western mass tourist' (namely audiences with buying power consuming spaces as a way to escape from modernity) take centre stage in the tourism narrative globally (see Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Consequently, it remains apparent that the postcolonial 'other' is often represented with a cultural and traditional aura, different from that of the modern man/woman and the modern social world.

Nevertheless, our analysis also suggests that postcolonial nation-states' resistance to (neo)colonial pressure persists. More specifically, forms of resistance need to balance attempts to celebrate national identity (as an anti-colonial sentiment) and the needs of the market (selling the 'cultural other'). Hence the narrative produced encapsulates both colonial (i.e. tea plantations, British colonial hill stations and ports) and national (i.e. Buddhist celebrations, pre-colonial Buddhist architecture) features. To a certain extent, the demand to present places as 'culturally authentic' and 'discoverable' by western tourists could be conceived as an opportunity to celebrate the nationalist narrative. Local people are thus captured performing roles that are culturally and traditionally significant (i.e. Buddhist architecture, fish industry) to create an aura of 'exoticism' and 'difference' at odds with modernity.

In balancing global demand and local values, national

representations of gendered identities do not necessarily construct local women and men as stereotypical 'powerless' victims. Also, the images do not necessarily evoke typical sexist gendered 'others' as at times they reject women placed in feminine sexual or domestic roles and men in traditionally masculine consumer roles. This imagery, to a certain extent, challenges stereotypical ideas of gender subscribed to the postcolonial other. However, it should also be noted that while the state's gender representations attempt to negotiate a balance between the global (colonial) and the local national (anti-colonial) in its tourism strategies, minority groups within the local context (religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic, class-based) are subjected to a multitude of biased representations (or no representation at all). In summary, gender representations are indeed negotiated through cultural and ideological structures, and to a larger extent, they remain (in the contemporary times) entangled in coloniality, either as a way of conforming to it or as a means of resisting it (see Wijesinghe, 2020). This further means that mitigating gender issues (especially gender equality as it has become one of the main agendas of sustainable development and tourism worldwide; see UN Women-Asia and the Pacific, 2020; World Tourism Organization, 2019) requires an in-depth understanding of 'intersectionality'. Indeed, taking into account location, ethnicity, nationality, any other identity markers, alongside the interplay of local and global power structures, could lead to a better understanding of the forces that continue to influence such inequalities.

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