

Travel Series as TV Entertainment

Genre characteristics and touristic views on foreign countries

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Why is it not the deprived developing country, but rather the tempting destination the host arrives in when guiding the audience in a travel series? And how can we explore the specific combination of entertainment and education that travel series represent? Basically the travel series genre is a hybrid of journalistic documentary, entertaining lifestyle series and TV ads and the different series put different emphasis on the different genre elements. Travel series represent a certain kind of mediated consumption and they reflect lifestyle identity in relation to touristic consumer cultures. Like other lifestyle series dealing with consumption products and lifestyle markers encompassing fashion, food, garden, design and interior that balance somewhere between journalism and advertising, travel series typically deal with destinations, travel modes, cultural experiences and food as commodities.

To understand the cultural and democratic value of travel series as a popular TV genre in the context of public service broadcasting, it is not the fact that the series contain educative and enlightening information about foreign cultures told in an entertaining and popular way that are of my interest. Rather it is tourism and media consumer culture as such, one has to expound as valuable democratic and cultural practice. The article presents different matrices of the respectively cultural and consumer knowledge that the different types of travel series include.

In Denmark a research work on how Danish broadcasters represent foreign countries in news and factual programmes was completed in 2005, and the report documents the huge popularity of the travel series and argues that the combination of entertainment and education is a very favourable mixture in a public service context (Kabel 2005). By taking this contention as a starting point, I want to elaborate and nuance the argument by presenting a theoretical framework for analyzing and expounding travel series as an entertaining TV genre, and by pointing out different touristic views and matrices of knowledge that travel series as popular media genre represent. My main argument is that contemporary travel series, with distinctive features in common with lifestyle programmes, deal with global culture and travelling in delightful, promotional and touristic ways, in which the educative element relates mainly to consumer culture and not to a democratic, journal-

istic rationality. Travel series include distinctive ways of relating oneself to the rest of the world, and they represent different kind of respectively cultural and consumer knowledge.

To exemplify the different communicative modes and touristic views in travel series, I will present travel series presented on Danish TV. The analytical examples are chosen from an empirical study of travel series on five Danish television channels in the period from the end of monopoly in 1988 to 2005. In this period we see a general tendency away from educational and documentary generic features in travel series and towards series based on entertaining and commodity communicative modes. The research work is part of the current Danish research project *TV-entertainment – Crossmediality and Knowledge* (2006-2010).¹ The analytical examples presented in this article are primarily Danish and Scandinavian productions, reflecting the general interest and perspective of the research project. In the last part of the article I will point out different matrices of respectively cultural and consumption knowledge that the different types of travel series include. In other words, why is it not the deprived developing country, but rather the tempting destination the host arrives in to guide the audience? And how can we explore the specific combination of entertainment and education that travel series represent?

Factual TV entertainment

In an international context the genre term in itself is confusing and combines examples of, for example, holiday programmes, leisure programmes, travel shows and travel series. At the same time the different terms highlight the different historical and cultural characteristics of the genre, as well as indicating a genre that is in a state of constant development and negotiation, as the case with many factual TV entertainment genres (Hill 2007).

Travel series is a hybrid genre. Historically travel series have been linked to travel literature, travel journalism and anthropological films, and as a contemporary television genre, it combines elements from documentary film, didactic educative television program, hosed-based factual entertainment genre as lifestyle series, talk shows and TV ads respectively. In a Danish context travel series are presented together with lifestyle programs, quizzes, documentary series and news programmes with the purpose of embracing as many viewers as possible. In other words travel series form part of the extensive number of factual and light entertainment series shown at prime time on weekdays which deal with lifestyle, identity and ordinary life, and which blur the distinction between genres (Bonner, 2003, Bell & Hallows 2005). Annette Hill (2007) has described the expansion of factual programs and hybrids in contemporary television and travel series as being related to the growth of lifestyle programs, lifestyle experiment programs and nature documentaries. International production companies and TV channels such as Travel Channel, Discovery Channel, Pilot Production and BBC Lifestyle have developed the genre further, making it more sophisticated and presenting non-stop travel, food and lifestyle programmes for a global market. In a Danish context national public service broadcasters have positioned their subchannels (DR2 and TV2 Charlie) by presenting series about travel, food and lifestyle on weekdays.

Travel series are characterized by being a series format in which the host typically guides the

viewer to new destinations every week, and his/her capacity to create a good mood and the audio-visual pleasure given are important concepts. David Dunn (2005a) underlines how travel series have an implicit commercial value for holiday destinations, and the way pictures, language and rhetoric are used is similar to commercials. Dunn points to new tendencies that have emerged in British travel series in recent decades. For example new holiday series are more specific with regard to their target group, and the focus on the destination has diminished in favour of the increasing use of popular hosts and guests in the programmes, a "*celebration of celebrity*" (ibid. p.136).

Communicative modes and genre features in travel series

There are two obvious theoretical aspects regarding travel series. One is in relation to theories on actual TV entertainment genres and the other one is in relation to tourism theory. These theoretical aspects reflect the two main communicative issues that exist in travel series: firstly how the series address and include the viewer (the media communicative aspect) and secondly how the series represent and stage the destination and the route (tourist communicative aspect). My overall interest in investigating travel series as media phenomenon is to expound the communicative roles of the series the kind of global knowledge they represent. By using reception aesthetic as my main analytical approach, I can explore the role of the viewer and how travel series include armchair travellers with specific views on the world. I will suggest a theoretical framework for analyzing different types of travel series that on the one hand identifies the *communicative mode* and on the other hand the *touristic view* that the series represent. The dramaturgic and visual aesthetics of the series are related to a tourist-specific element (e.g. the travel form and lifestyle of the backpackers), a place-specific element (e.g. the series is constructed on the basis of a specific travel route and different travel goals) and also a media-specific element (e.g. the use of public persons and media celebrities as host as well as game show and makeover elements) respectively (Dunn 2005b, Waade 2006). The two former elements are related to the touristic view, while the latter is related to the communicative mode.

To differentiate between different types of travel series with regard to their communicative mode, I will distinguish between travel series with a primarily *documentary*, *factual entertainment* and a *commercial* mode. The communicative mode is related to basic expectations and expressions in a specific communicative act. Bill Nichols (2001) uses the term communicative mode to describe different documentary film genres, Paddy Scannell talks about communicative intentionality (Scannell 1995) and Annette Hill uses the term viewing modes in regard to factual television (news, documentary and reality modes respectively, Hill. 2007:97ff). When it comes to travel series, there are three main genre roots, namely documentary, factual entertainment and TV ads. Travel series are not similar to advertisements in terms of formal features and format, but as a communicative mode, there are several similarities between the two genres. At the same time one might question whether travel series are related to documentaries as a genre and shouldn't just be characterized as light entertainment. As my material shows, and the Scandinavian broadcast history illustrates, there are a wide range of travel documentaries based on journalistic, political and enlightening ambitions which are presented at prime time as family TV entertainment.

The individual travel series combines elements from the different genre categories, but typically one mode will dominate the series. These communicative modes are related to certain TV genres and encompass a specific communicative intention, atmosphere, structure and the way the series include the viewer. Genre specific elements are used in different ways in the series, for example whether the host is primarily an entertainer or an authoritative voiceover, whether the dramaturgic structure is based on a narrative conflict or rather a descriptive form, the emphasis on tourist information, such as travel routes, tips and currency, and to what extent the series celebrate specific destinations or travel forms.

Documentary mode

The series addresses the viewer as a citizen. Focus is on information, enlightenment and journalistic argument. Typically with a male, authoritative host, who informs the viewer, sometimes by using a journalistic conflict and argument, as well as facts and themes, illustrative camera and sound and also the role of participants as, for example, expert, victim and journalistic informants.

Factual entertainment mode

The series addresses the viewer as a friend. A host- based *feel-good* TV, including a wide range of subcategories, such as lifestyle programmes, life experience programmes, docusoaps, game shows and makeovers (Hill 2007:51). Focus is on sociality, intimacy, travelling as lifestyle, visual pleasure and imagination. This is expressed in, among other things, the social role of the host and interaction with the viewer and the choice of subjects, host and participants. The series might use dramaturgic conflict and elements from different subgenres of factual entertainment (e.g. makeover, celebrity, life experiment).

Consumer mode

The series addresses the viewer as consumer. Focus is on destinations, types of tourists, food and sights, features of the country being visited and its specific culture and nature, as well as encounters with tourists and locals. This is expressed in the choice of destination and means of travelling, tempting and sensuous pictures and music, positive experiences, concrete consumer advice and tourist information. The viewer is placed in the role of customer and tourist in the series.

The communicative intentionality of the travel series is to entertain the television audience with factual information, tempting travel scenes and a host who inspires confidence and includes people, and who guides the viewer safely from place to place. The host plays an important role in the travel series and he/she binds the different features together, creates identification for the viewer as well as ensuring a good atmosphere and contact between the participants in the program and contact with the viewers.

Destination images and touristic views in travel series

Television is the viewers' window to the world, and through television the big wide world is brought into the domestic shelter of everyday life (Andersson 2006). Travel series offer the viewer a look at

other cultures, landscapes and foreign places in the world and they deal with cultural and national differences through their audiovisual communication in sophisticated aesthetical and emotional ways. The series constitute specific perspectives on the world and create and maintain specific national and cultural constructions (Edensor 2002). Travel series contain some basic images and ways of appropriating destinations, foreign culture and people in the way they are constructed dramaturgically, visually and auditorily. These images are related to tourist culture and travel history.

In addition to genre elements and communicative modes travel series also involve different perspectives on destinations, tourist roles, culture and landscapes. The tourist gaze is not only to do with what is seen (for example a beach, a restaurant, a castle or a landscape), but also the way he/she looks and the relation that is established between the tourist looking and the people being looked at. In the book *The Tourist Gaze* (1990/2002) John Urry describes how this relation involves a power dimension and specific photographic signs and motifs. In travel series the camera, the music and the host represent this tourist gaze, and the different types of series involve different spatial appropriations. Urry's presentation in 1990 of a respectively romantic tourist and collective gaze has, over time, inspired many tourist researchers and Urry has since (Urry 2005:21) suggested supplementary operative types of tourist gazes, namely a spectatorial, an anthropological, a reverential, an environmental and even a mediated gaze. All these touristic views include specific (power) relations, expectations and ways of appropriating destinations. André Jansson (2002) follows up on Urry's ideas and distinguishes between *symbiotic* and *antagonistic* modes of spatial appropriations. The former mode represents a tourist that seeks to get close to the people, the culture and the place he/she visits, e.g. farmhouse holidays, backpacking and *homestay* guesthouses (Wang 2007:789). In the antagonistic mode the traveller looks at places and people from safe distance without getting involved, e.g. bus-tours, safaris, *sightseeing*, folklore performances and charter holiday travels. Jansson mentions two aspects of the different touristic views, the one focusing on landscapes and places, and the other on social relations and people. He also gives examples of media genres that reflect the two different touristic views, e.g. documentaries and snapshot photography illustrate the symbiotic gaze, while tourist brochures, souvenirs and popular travel series typically represent the antagonistic gaze (Jansson 2002:435). As I will demonstrate later through analytical examples, there are also travel series that include a symbiotic gaze, depending on the way the camera, visual images and the host are used, and on how the journey is staged. In relation to travel series, the symbiotic and the antagonistic gazes represent different touristic views of foreign culture and places, as well as characterizing how the series stage certain relations between the armchair traveller and the outside world.

The symbiotic gaze is an intimate and bodily-based image expressed in the visual and dramaturgic concept of the travel series, e.g. by using hand-held camcorders, close ups, grainy images, showing a host/tourist that comes close to the local people, and focusing on personal and emotional experiences of places, landscapes and social encounters. The symbiotic gaze might typically include a haptic, multi-sensuous image that requires an emotional and bodily reaction and involvement from the viewer. The antagonistic gaze, on the other hand, includes several of Urry's different gaze types (romantic, collective, anthropological, environmental etc.) and represents a distanced optic on landscapes and socioscapes, and also includes an antagonistic role in which the tourist initiates

Communicative modes and touristic views in travel series

Communicative modes	Touristic view	
	Symbiotic gaze	Antagonistic gaze
a) Documentary mode	Example: In the black pot, DR2/Kirk (Miss Mukupa & Nikolaj Kirk)	Example: From Cape to Kilimanjaro, STV, (Lars Ørlund)
b) Factual entertainment mode	Example: Pilot Guides with the host Ian Wright, Pilot production, Discovery Channel	Example: On the edge of the world, Angel Film/TV2 (Thomas Breinholt)
c) Consumer mode	Example: The thrillseekers guide series, Travel Channel	Example: Tina's kitchen, New Scandinavian Cooking/Tellus Works

the action. Typically antagonistic images include landscape panoramas, high angle views, maps, picturesque images and images of exotic and strange places and people. The antagonistic view is also highlighted by the type of traveller that is represented in the series. For example there are many male hosts travelling like modern-day adventurers and explorers.

Elfride Fürsich also refers to different tourist roles in categorizing travel series, and her point is that these roles illustrate different ways of acting in and relating to the surrounding world (Fürsich 2002a, 2002b). She points to the backpacker series *Lonely Planet*, which represents an anti-tourist perspective in which the hosts distance themselves from typical mass tourists. The critical journalistic series *Rough Guide* represents a post-touristic perspective because the series displays a generally critical attitude to tourism as such, while the series *Traveller* represents a multicultural and cosmopolitan perspective because the hosts have a complex cultural background and the series doesn't represent a specific national starting point, but rather a global consumer lifestyle. These different ways of travelling illustrate different modes of appropriating and approaching cultures and destinations and as media entertainment these types of traveller may also be used as stereotypes to create immediate recognition and comedy (e.g. the reality format *Holiday Swap*). My point is that the touristic view is also included in the visual and dramaturgic concept that the travel series constitutes and not just in the host/tourist type that is presented.

With regard to the empirical material I have examined, travel series on Danish TV include primarily antagonistic tourist views based on a documentary communicative mode, but there are also a large number of series that combine the antagonistic view with a factual entertainment mode. The former, traditional category has been decreasing in number over the past decade in favour of the latter. At the same time, foreign formats and programmes in which the entertainment mode dominates through the use of, for example, reality and makeover elements or by focusing on food,

and others characterised by the advertisement mode and produced for an international media and tourism market, are playing an increasing role. This tendency reflects the changing conditions for national broadcasting and TV production, as well the augmented awareness of TV audiences and tourists as consumers.

One night in Malaysia, the next on the Faroe Islands, the third on a horseback expedition in Mongolia, the following on a journey to the city of Washington and the night after on a ship sailing to secret parts of China. Travel series celebrate the globe as a destination and the armchair traveller can pick and choose from a range of series. This kind of abundance of travel possibilities, delightful images and *feel-good* television characterizing travel series as genre and media entertainment, is important in understanding how the series stage a certain way of looking at the world. In the following I will present four examples of typical travel series presented on Danish TV to illustrate different combinations of respectively genre features, communicative mode and touristic modalities. I will focus on the categories that are dominant, namely the two documentary modes, the antagonistic entertainment mode and the antagonistic consumer mode.²

Example 1: From Cape to Kilimanjaro with Lars Ørlund

This example illustrates a travel series in which the documentary communicative mode is combined with an antagonistic tourist gaze. The series has an implicit enlightening ambition to show and tell the viewer about foreign countries and cultures and their history and politics. The viewers are addressed as responsible citizens. In a Scandinavian context there are many travel series that are based on this feature. The host is typically a popular, middle-aged, male-explores-the-world type, and he often produces several series focusing on different parts of the world (e.g. Troels Kløvedal, Vagn Olsen). An international example is Michael Palin's well known travel series. The antagonistic gaze is expressed in their role as explorer, conqueror and adventurer, in which the place is the object of their desire, though in a political, idealistic and scientific way. The travel series *From Cape to Kilimanjaro* (Fra Kap til Kilimanjaro) consists of 8 episodes, where the Danish biologist and journalist Lars Ørlund, who grew up in Africa, travels through South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya in his old Land Rover together with a photographer. The series was produced in 2002 for TV and the DVD-market, and has been shown on the national public service channel DR1.

The concept of the series is that the host follows the footsteps of the white inhabitants as well as "the ones who pay the price for our ravage", as Ørlund himself puts it in the first episode. In other words he has a journalistic and partly critical starting point for his series, and wherever he goes, he interviews people about, among other things, social disturbances, political and financial conditions, tourism and development aid. Ørlund is simultaneously host, *voice-over* and commentator, and the series is characterized by a documentary mode with an argumentative rhetoric and an authoritative voice-over, where the pictures and editing typically support the spoken word. The focus is on Ørlund as scientist and leader of the expedition, and the viewers see how he packs his car, how he plans his route and organises his expedition. In other words Ørlund has a didactic role as expert.

The series establishes an antagonistic perspective on Africa, where the country, the history, the

society and the landscape is viewed at a distance. It is in no way a cynical or uninterested distance, but a relation that is characterized by objective and analytical distance and where the participants are informants in relation to the general journalistic idea. If we consider the visual style of the series, it also reflects a high standard of production and there are beautiful panoramas and colourful images and the visual style indicates a professional visual distance or a kind of postcard-aesthetic with high photographic texture and composition. In other words, the visual style constitutes an optic and picturesque distanced gaze at the destination. The camera partly follows Ørlund's own perspective, but it also assumes a divine look, where the viewer can look at landscapes and the little Land Rover driving through the harsh, naked landscapes. The series contains sequences where the viewer follows Ørlund over infinitely long distances, with the camera alternately showing the landscapes and Ørlund explaining something. Ørlund's authoritative voice informs the viewer, while he/she enjoys the sight of mountains, desert and sand, landscape transformations, trees and exotic villages. The beautiful images on screen are accompanied by soft music. Ørlund's didactic voice-over is connoting the documentary mood, while the image and the music is connoting the antagonistic gaze.

It is the magnificence of Africa that is being staged – the wild, barren natural landscapes, with exotic people and animals. It is Africa as iconic place and ideological landscape that is emphasised, a continent that has been the victim of the Europeans' abuse of power in the interests of science, colonization, development aid and tourism (Edensor 2002). The series contains this double perspective: on the one hand critical, objective and journalistic interpretation, on the other hand panoramic and postcard-like representations of an exotic culture and an overwhelming and unfamiliar landscape.

Example 2: In the black pot with Miss Mukupa and Nikolaj Kirk

This example also illustrates a documentary communicative mode, but quite a different documentary style. The documentary image is based on an intimate and subjective point of view, a kind of *performative* documentary (Nichols 2001, Jerslev 2004:186f, Bondebjerg 2009). Thus this style includes quite a different touristic gaze, namely a symbiotic, personal and emotionalized gaze. In my material, there are quite a few examples of this modality, but it represents a tendency as regards the documentary/reality mix on screen, as well as personalized and public journalism, and it may be a type of travel series we come to see more of in the future. MTV developed a travel series concept in which this modality of documentary/symbiotic gaze was represented, as well as game show & factual entertainment features combined with the symbiotic tourist gaze.

The miniseries *In the black pot* (I den sorte gryde), shown on DR2 in 2003, is an example of a different representation of the same Africa. The series consists of two episodes, and it is a personal documentary and travel report, in which the well-known Danish-Zambian hip-hop musician Karen Mukupa, together with her boyfriend, Nikolaj Kirk, who is a popular Danish TV chef and author, go back to the village where she grew up. This intimate documentary style is supported by the fact that it is their own video-diary that functions as the starting point for the series, that the couple talk to each other through the camera and that at no point do they directly address the viewers.

The handheld camera creates a particularly realistic style, the pictures are at times grainy and out of focus, and the viewers can follow the experiences of the couple from their perspective, through the lens of the handheld camcorder. The series illustrates how pictures are a process more than a product, and that the camera is used to travel and experience. This is a feature that characterizes the intimate and performative documentary. There is no explanatory *voice-over* or other form of distancing or didactic device. There is the occasional use of graphics to indicate the different places the travellers visit. The viewer is indirectly informed by Karen when she explains to her boyfriend Nikolaj where they are, what is happening and why things are happening.

The music plays an important role in the series. There is a distinctive underscore, Karen is a musician herself, she interviews young musicians and takes part in a hip hop concert. The underscore is modern African popular music, which adds a certain pulse and rhythm and, in a similar way to the hand-held camera, creates a bodily and emotional communicative effect. The series thereby emphasizes a televisual metonymic relation between the viewer and the image and also illustrates a symbiotic relation between the traveller and the destination. It is the intimate and bodily experience that is highlighted in the concept and audiovisual aesthetics of the series, and the viewers vision of African culture and place is constituted by the hosts' personal relations and encounters with people. This private atmosphere staged by the series is supported by the relationship between Karen and Nikolaj where, for example, at the end of the first episode Karen is clearly embarrassed by Nikolaj's insistent behaviour towards a train employee. This sort of backstage footage is characteristic of the intimate documentary. Likewise there is little use of panoramic shots and there are no postcard views, iconic places or ideological landscapes (Edensor 2002). Instead the series illustrates homely places, everyday haunts and places of popular culture (e.g. the local market place, the hip hop concert). The series contains elements of cultural constructions such as us/them and Denmark-Tanzania/Zambia. This is not least expressed by Nikolaj, who is visiting Zambia and Tanzania for the first time. But since Karen is the host, being both Danish and African, and because it is not a representation of Tanzania and Zambia as such, but a personal travel-diary, it is not these typical cultural and national constructions that characterize the series, but rather personal meetings across culture.

Karen and Nikolaj do not play the role of social TV host, but instead play themselves as private, albeit well known, people and media persona. For example, Karen talks to hip hop musicians, while Nikolaj prepares food at the local dock. The performative intimacy seen on screen, is to do with the relation between the two main people, as well as how the viewer gets close to their personal experiences. In the next example, another kind of intimacy is emphasized, namely the relation between the viewer and the host.

Example 3: On the edge of the world with Thomas Breinholt

This example illustrates an entertainment communicative mode and the series addresses the audience as friend and travel pal. There are a lot of examples of this modality in both the Scandinavian and international context, and there are many different ways of combining elements from factual TV entertainment genres (lifestyle programmes, life experience programmes, docusoap, game

show, makeover etc) and the antagonistic tourist gaze respectively. One might say that this modality is typical of travel TV series as popular genre, and the tendency is for new combinations and concepts to be developed as part of the TV channels' struggle for audience and market share.

The popular series *On the edge of the world* (På kanten af verden), shown on TV2 in 2003, is a travel series that illustrates the entertaining mode. The concept is, that Thomas Breinholt and his cameraman go on dangerous journeys to faraway places. Among other things they go to a jungle in New Guinea to find cannibals. It is the idea of virgin nature, the wild and the uncanny picture of people eating each other that, among other things, creates the dramaturgic plot, the conflicts and also the audiovisual concept in the series. The plot is that Breinholt and his cameraman are explorers who will be among "the first civilised people" (as they put it themselves) to try to find these wild people and risk being eaten by the cannibals. The series is based/built on an explicit conflict between an "us" of civilised people and discoverers, and a "them" of strangers, wild people and cannibals. The ironic undertone in the exaggerated use of conflict, alienation, mythologizing and demonization of the destination adds a humour and entertaining atmosphere, and thereby denies some of the clichéd ideas and stereotypes that exist in relation to foreign cultures. For instance the series uses a *voice-over* to present conflict and create excitement, suspense and expectation, and at the beginning the narrator says: "here is a story that started as a romantic dream and ended as a nightmare". The dramaturgic conflict is supported by the use of hidden camera, and Breinholt speaks intimately to the camera and whispers to confide his innermost fears and suspicions to the viewer, which establishes an alliance between viewer and host with regard to the basic mistrust and scepticism he has towards the people he meets. For example, the host makes a big deal out of his suspicion that one of the locals who helps organize the journey into the jungle is trying to cheat him out of money. The factual entertainment mode in the series is characterized, by the use of an explicit and thrilling dramatic conflict (like in a game show), the host's efforts to maintain a communicative alliance with the viewer, the use of humour, as well as comic and exaggerated images and scenes (e.g. when the camera dwells on the cannibal's mouth and toothpick while he grins widely to the cameraman).

When it comes to the visual style, the series makes use of hand-held camera, grainy and unfocused pictures and camera *close ups* of iconic motifs, e.g. the nose of a cannibal with a stick through it, scraps of meat from the meal, meat hanging to dry. In contrast to the series *In the black pot*, the visual realism in *On the edge of the world* indicates raw reality, intimacy and credibility as a kind of affective and speculative realism that calls for certain reactions from the viewer. The dramaturgic setting is also different, and the plot is constructed by the search for the cannibal as an extreme other, and there is a basic conflict between the wild and the host, in which the local are helpers and antagonists. It is clear that the story is exaggerated, and that the visual intimacy and suspense created through snapshot realism expresses a staged reality effect and an in no way credible reality. In the report *The world far from here* (Kabel, 2002, p. 64), the visual aesthetics of the series are described as authentic as long as the viewers can follow the events together with the host. To be more precise, the series deal with a *staged authenticity*, similar to the realism in reality-TV and experiment lifestyle programs (Hill, 2007). This staged authenticity is created through, for example,

hidden cameras, *close ups* of iconic and affective motifs, the whispered confiding of the host, hand-held camera and poor image quality.

With regard to the use of conflict and audiovisual means of creating excitement and release, the series illustrates an antagonistic relation between the traveller and the destination. There are no national constructions at work, but a well-known cliché of the cannibal as the wild thing, as well as the stereotyp of the civilized (west) versus the wild (east).

Example 4: New Scandinavian Cooking: Tina's kitchen

In this case, it is the combination of antagonistic tourist gaze and a consumer communicative mode that is illustrated. This kind of travel series also represents another production ideology and ambition than is the case in the previous examples, in which food and travel are seen as saleable and compound media products. *Tina's kitchen* is part of a larger concept from New Scandinavian Cooking, and the Swedish TV chef is the starting point for a TV series consisting of several seasons (winter, summer) for the TV and DVD-markets and a cookbook respectively (<http://www.scand-cook.com>). There are several travel series that resemble this example, especially in an international context and, for example, series presented on Travel Channels, Pilot Productions' shopping and food guides, chef series that are based on a travel concept and include a place branding effect (e.g. Stein's *French Odyssey*, *Floyd Around the Med*). It is characteristic that these concepts are platform productions and include both TV series, DVDs for sale, branded hosts/chefs, books, online communities and homepages (e.g. www.pilotguides.com).

Tina's kitchen is both a food series and a travel series and it is not about a host travelling to faraway places, but instead a journey around Sweden, where she presents various destinations in which the food represents specific regions and also functions as tempting images. The series is produced with an eye to international sales, to attracting tourists and to marketing Sweden and Scandinavian as country and destination. For instance Tina speaks in English, the Swedish car company Volvo and Visit Sweden are main sponsors of the production, and there are several promotional elements, both visual and verbal. There are certain strategies of *place branding* that appear, both indirectly through concept and sponsoring, and more directly through positive publicity, information about concrete attractions and the use of visual icons of Sweden as a tourist destination (Christensen & Povlsen, 2008). The destinations that are selected are the most touristic and iconic places, e.g. Gotland with beaches and nature, Dalarna with wooden horses painted with roses and midsummer night, fish on the west coast and barbeques in the skerries of Stockholm. Each episode contains a presentation of a local place or attraction, and Tina herself is the one who directly addresses the viewer and explains and advertises. For instance in the first episode she talks about what a wonderful island Gotland is, how satisfied all the tourists who visit the island are, and how enthusiastic she herself is about the beach, the nature, the culture, and the raw materials on the island. Visually this consumer mode is expressed through the fact that the camera, for short moments, lingers on beautiful scenery and tourist attractions while the music underscores the image. In one episode the ferry sails by in the background, the camera zooms in on the ferry, Tina's voice fades out while

the music fades in, and the viewer can enjoy the sight of “Destination Gotland” (the name of the ferry), as it majestically sails by while the sun is shining. While “Destination Gotland” is a ferry that is beautiful in itself, this also indicates the place that the episode is about (Gotland) as well as the fact that Gotland is a popular tourist destination. The scene with the ferry is one of many conspicuous tourist sights that underline the consumer and marketing mode of the series.

With regard to the way in which the series represents places as tourist commodities and destinations, it is not least the ideological, rural national landscapes and the iconic places that are used to maintain the idea of Swedish national culture (Edensor 2002). The series has an amorous visual look that represents Sweden as national culture and holiday idyll. For example the celebration of midsummer night, the beaches of Gotland, rock formations and medieval castles, and the Swedish flag swaying in the wind with the Swedish archipelago in the background and Tina’s outdoor kitchen in the foreground. Tina herself is an icon of Swedish romantic culture: blond hair, no make up, smiling, young and natural, and dressed in her grandmothers’ national costume with a garland in her hair on the occasion of midsummer night. In the first episode Tina cooks on the very end of a rock on the coastline of Gotland and the rock formations, stones, wind, water, sky and sun create a spectacular setting for the chef and the food. The camera highlights the steep rock walls and it is as if Tina could fall backwards into the Baltic at any moment. It is the natural and wild Sweden that is represented. The spectacular iconic motifs and the postcard-like and picturesque aesthetic of the landscapes and the locations, together with the tempting, persuasive and instructive images of cooking, travel and tourist experience, illustrate an antagonistic point of view.

Matrices of knowledge in travel series

My initial question regarding the Danish survey (Kabel 2005) was how it could be that the combination of entertainment and education is a very favourable mixture in a public service context. The study was based on a journalistic point of view and the conclusion was that information about foreign culture and countries was optimal when told in an entertaining way. My objection is that the author has not been conscious of the different ways of addressing the audience that are used in travel series. I have, in my presentation, been focusing on basic communicative and aesthetic features of travel series as genre, and how they represent the foreign cultures and countries in a specific and mediated context. I would suggest that it is not the mixture of entertainment and education that is favourable with regard to public service values, but rather the fact that is a popular genre with good ratings and in that sense is evidently public service.

At the same time, travel series do contain different kinds of knowledge and educative elements. It is not educative with regard to the viewer as a citizen in a democratic sense, but rather as a consumer and tourist. To point out the different kinds of cultural and consumer knowledge, I will, as a concluding remark, present some of the main ideas that are represented in theories and research work on travel series in an international context. By using the term *matrices of knowledge* I want to illuminate the ways in which travel series show other cultures and how the viewer’s point of view is staged and reflected in the series. In contrast to the term communicative mode that illustrates

the way the series addresses the viewer, matrices of knowledge is a much more complex term that includes both production and reception and covers not only interpretative cognitive schema, but also emotional, bodily investments, as well as ways of acting (Drotner 2002). In other words matrices of knowledge describe general cultural conditions that have an influence on the way people act and think. This way of understanding knowledge and matrices respectively is grounded in phenomenological theory, in which knowledge is based on bodily senses and actions (Gustavsson 2000:73). For example, the matrices of consumer knowledge influence the audiences' reception of travel series (expectations about information on prices, accommodation and recommended destinations) as well as influencing the viewer's expectations and actions next time he/she travels as a tourist (Boorstin 1962, Urry 1990/2002:152ff, Jansson 2004:158).

To characterize the active matrices of knowledge in travel series, I have focused on prominent matrices in my own analytical material as well as in scholarly media analyses of travel series. There have been few scholarly studies of travel series, even though it is a popular genre. The matrices of knowledge that are to be seen in travel series concerning these studies are matrices of respectively *cultural* and *consumer* knowledge.

Matrices of cultural knowledge

The examples I have shown illustrate different ways of representing foreign places and cultures. *From Cape to Kilimanjaro* includes a critical approach as the host tries to establish a certain way of understanding and appropriating Africa through documentary and educative communication. *On the edge of the world* and *In the black pot* represent both an authentic meeting with the unfamiliar, an authenticity that is created in the form of televisual realism. *Tina's kitchen* on the other hand shows Sweden as destination and the series involves an explicit national discourse. In my own study, as well as in the scholarly works that look at travel series, the matrices on cultural knowledge include a *critical and journalistic* viewpoint, *stereotyped* knowledge and a pursued interest for *authentic* culture respectively.

Elfriede Fürsich demonstrates different ways of staging the host as traveller, different national and cultural discourses that are used in the travel series, as well as different journalistic ambitions (Fürsich 2002a, 2002b). Fürsich has a normative and qualitative aim for her analyses. She points to the ideological, oppressive and political issues that the travel series represent and are proclaiming an ethic for journalism about global conditions. Regarding travel series she suggests a self-reflexive and meta-communicative journalistic approach, both in relation to what is said and shown, but also to the way in which things are said and shown in the series. She writes that media practitioners should challenge the traditional modes of journalistic representation and integrate their own perspective into the program: "*This is the only way for the audience and "locals" to understand the ideological point of reference of both journalists and journalism*" (Fürsich, 2002a, s. 79). Her work represents a journalistic matrix of knowledge including a critical, analytical and ideologically reflexive approach. This matrix is related to the journalistic documentary as journalistic genre.

The next cultural matrix is the one concerning *stereotypes* (e.g. nationality, cannibals, Africans). With regard to analytical works on travel series as intercultural communication, the representation

of national differences and stereotypes is typical for travel series. The Norwegian media researcher Kristin Orgeret (2002) argues that nationality plays an important role in travel series, and by analysing a popular Norwegian travel series, *Travelling with the lads* (Med gutta på tur), she argues that the travel series is not so much about foreign places and cultures, but rather “the viewer encountering the Norwegian in the foreign” (Orgeret 2002, p. 161, my translation). She points to the specific forms of humour that predominate the series, among other things the hosts’ ironic tone and also the stereotyped representations of cultural and national differences. Orgeret argues that the series emphasizes the national differences and highlights national stability at a time where the national state is said to have an uncertain future” (ibid, p.178, my translation).

The last cultural matrix I have identified from the scholarly works of Orgeret and others and my own study is the one about *authenticity*. Orgeret describes how travel series emphasize authentic experiences and authentic culture. Food and sport are used as “a jemmy to come into closer contact with the local culture” (ibid. p. 169), and small rural places are preferred to the big cities on the basis that the authentic and original in a culture is best preserved in the provinces. Travel series stage the exotic, the curious and the strange in the cultures they are about, and this is not just in order to reflect cultural and national differences, but also to create humour, commitment and emotional effects. Matrices of authenticity deals with the idea that there are some cultures and places that are more authentic than others, as well as the search for authentic affects both in tourism and media experiences. Authenticity has been a key word in tourism theory and practice, as well as being an issue in media aesthetics. Travel series represent strategies of authenticity to represent authentic tourist sights (e.g. the true African landscape and history in *From Cape to Kilimanjaro*) as well as authentic and reliable factual TV (e.g. the travel diary in *In the black pot*).

Matrices of consumer knowledge

With regard to the matrices of consumer knowledge in relation to travel series, it is particularly two forms of consumer culture that these matrices contain: as a *tourist* and a *media* consumer respectively. Related to the tourist competence matrix, it includes the familiarity with different ways of travelling, destinations and consumption of food, experiences as well as goods while travelling. Related to the media consumer competences, it represents a meta-communicative competence that includes the knowledge of different media, genres, communicative modes and concepts. Travel and tourism are popular media content, not just as factual TV entertainment and commercial, but also in newspapers, magazines, and on the Internet, as well as well tourist destinations being used as film location (e.g. James Bond, Lord of the Rings, etc). This matrix of knowledge implies that the viewer/the tourist views the surrounding world as commodities and services that can be acquired through buying and consuming. The travel series underline that it is possible to travel to these places and visit these cultures and countries (Waade 2006). At the same time it is an important point, that the armchair traveller’s virtual trip gives pleasurable experiences and imaginary journeys to tropical paradise islands and big cities with no fear of infectious diseases, financial problems, exhaustion or emotional conflicts.

As regards the matrix of *tourist* consumption, the examples of travel series I have mentioned all

illustrate, for example, different tourist types and travel forms. Lars Ørlund is the explorer and the leader of the expedition, Thomas Breinholt is the adventurer, Miss Mukupa goes on a personal journey of reminiscence and nostalgia, while Tina shows the typical tourist sights for families or couples. All these concepts are saleable tourist routes and packages. As long as travel series are related to tourism as consumer culture, this matrix is of predominant importance. Travel series offer substitute sightseeing and as Dunn argues, the primary function of the genre is related to its consumer and commodity value (Dunn 2005a:129).

The last matrix I have identified is the one of *audiovisual pleasure and imagination*. The visual pleasure is underlined by the way the camera pans over beautiful landscapes and picturesque city areas, the way it lingers on beautiful sunsets, characteristic pictures of atmosphere from the big cities or natural scenery, or the way *travel cam* is used to illustrate the mental space and the picture frieze that, for instance, the train journey offers. The affective function of the images is typically underlined by music filled with atmosphere, without the intrusion of graphics, *voice-over* or *speech*. The camera can be used to illustrate the perspective of the traveller (for example from the window of an airplane or looking at a landscape), or as a divine perspective that can look at the surface of the globe, e.g. satellite images, *high angle* camera shots or a camera that drives through the landscape at close range. In a lot of travel series maps and graphics are used to illustrate the travel route, and overall the armchair traveller is offered a sovereign view of the destination: a cartographic view that can get close, move around frictionlessly, look at everything from a cloud, change perspective, experience bodily movements (walk, climb, ride, taste, eat) and also navigate by means of map and satellite-technology (Waade 2006). The viewers perspective follows the camera, with a bird's eye view of the destination one moment and embodied and enjoying sensuous experiences of the place the next, e.g. trying to walk in the jungle without being attacked by cannibals and animals, tasting wild salmon, and finding tracks of your own childhood in a small village in Tanzania. Matrix of audiovisual pleasure and imagination are evident in travels series as in other lifestyle series and factual entertainment genres, and they might be the most active matrices of all the five I have mentioned (Lykke Christensen 2008).

Conclusion

Basically the travel series genre is a hybrid of journalistic documentary, entertaining lifestyle series and TV ad, and the different series put different emphasis on the different genre elements. Travel series represent a certain kind of mediated consumption and they reflect lifestyle identity in relation to touristic consumer cultures. Like other lifestyle series dealing with consumption products and lifestyle markers encompassing fashion, food, garden, design and interior that balance between journalism and advertising, travel series typically deal with destinations, travel modes, cultural experiences and food as commodities (Lykke Christensen 2008, Fürsich 2002).

To understand the cultural and democratic value of travel series as a popular TV genre in the context of public service broadcasting, it is not the fact that the series contain educative and enlightening information about foreign cultures, told in an entertaining and popular way. Rather

it is tourism and media consumer culture as such, that has to be seen as valuable democratic and cultural practice.

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Notes

1. www.TVunderholdning.au.dk
2. *Pilot Guides* and *The Thrillseekers Guide Series* are not analyzed in this article. See Waade 2006 for an elaborated argument on *Pilot Guides*.