





Transgender men in tourism: marginalisation, constraints and inclusion opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Transgender people experience intersecting forms of social marginalisation in different spheres of their lives. Both structural and interpersonal difficulties limit transgender individuals' opportunities for positive experiences that increase their health and well-being, such as tourism activities. The scarce research on the transgender population's tourism experiences has not focused exclusively on transgender men's experiences. Informed by an intersectional stigma perspective, this study sought to explore these men's perspective on tourism in two Latin American countries. Qualitative interviews were conducted with a sample of transgender males, which revealed that, due to structural and interpersonal constraints, these men tend to experience stigmatisation, discrimination, exclusion and heightened anxiety, fear and risk while travelling. However, tourism also provides transgender men with opportunities to construct their gender identity and perform selected aspects of their masculinity. Specific practical recommendations are offered to promote the creation of equitable, dignified tourism environments that reduce these men's experiences of stigmatisation during leisure trips.

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Introduction

Transgender refers to individuals whose gender expression or identity differs from the normative ideals assigned to biological sex using binary categories (Monterrubio et al., 2021). Transgender women are people born with male sexual organs who go through a transitional process to acquire a female gender. In contrast, transgender men are those born with female sexual organs who transition to a male gender (Levitt & Ippolito, 2014).

Diamond et al. (2011) conceptualise transgender from a sociological perspective as 'a broad category typically used to denote any individual whose gender identity or presentation either violates conventional conceptualisations of "male" or "female" or mixes different aspects of male and female role[s] and identit[ies]' (p. 629). Transgender individuals thus challenge the social norms established by the conventional gender binary. As a result, these people experience numerous forms of stigma depending on the axes of inequality they embody (e.g. femininity, ethnicity, race and social class). Transgender males and females are regularly subjected to institutional and interpersonal discrimination, marginalisation and violence in different spheres of their lives (Bradford et al., 2013; Cheney et al., 2017; Eastwood et al., 2021; Rodríguez Madera et al., 2015).

Transgender people are, therefore, a highly vulnerable social group. The Trans Murder Monitoring research project watches for and collects and analyses reports of murders of gender-dissident individuals, recording 3,314 murders of transgender or gender-diverse people in 74 countries worldwide from 2008 to 2019 (Fedorko et al., 2020). Latin America has consistently been the region with the highest rate of murders of transgender people (Rodríguez Madera, 2022). Multiple intersecting structures of domination (e.g. cisgenderism, heteropatriarchy and xenophobia) make Latin American countries' social environments extremely violent and non-conducive to efforts to recognise and protect individuals with diverse gender identities (Organisation of American States [OAS] & Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [IACHR], 2020; Wesp et al., 2019). This region has consequently been identified as one of the deadliest for transgender people, with almost 80% (i.e. 2,608 cases) of all transgender murders globally (Transgender Europe [TGEU], 2019).

Tourism, in particular, is marked by stigma, discrimination and violence against transgender travellers, which significantly affects their experiences as tourism consumers (Monterrubio et al., 2020; Olson & Reddy-Best, 2019). Experts need to examine more closely this industry's potential as a transformative social force

(Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006) and its ability to reduce inequality and minority groups' marginalisation, including transgender individuals.

Binary gender norms dictate expected variations, so transgender men and women experience tourism differently (Monterrubio et al., 2021). According to Schilt (2010), transgender men have stood on both sides of the gender binary. As women, these individuals may have experienced exclusionary attitudes, but they can get more recognition and respect as men, especially those who can physically pass as male and who are indistinguishable from other men. Transgender males thus move from a lower social status to a position of privilege in patriarchal systems and gender power relations (Zitz et al., 2014).

Few researchers have explored how this identity shift applies to tourism and travel. Studies have not focused exclusively on transgender men's tourism experiences, which means the way they feel about leisure travel is still unknown. To fill this gap, the present research sought to explore these men's tourism experiences in Latin America in order to provide a deeper theoretical understanding of male transgender individuals' perspectives on tourism and their practical implications for more inclusive tourism practices.

Literature review

Transgender men and intersectional stigma

Intersectional stigma research on transgender individuals concentrates on the effects of exposure to coexisting forms of stigma (e.g. sexism, racism, classism and gender- and ethnicity-related prejudice). Discrimination has an impact on multiple domains of these people's lives including family, work, community, travel and tourism (Biello & Hughto, 2021; Bocking et al., 2020; Cheney et al., 2017; Lubitow et al., 2017; Molina Rodríguez et al., 2016; Monterrubio et al., 2020; Monterrubio et al., 2021; Rodríguez Madera et al., 2015). The literature on this topic contains multiple studies that have documented these stigmas' pernicious effects on this population's health and well-being (Barrientos, 2016; Carpenter et al., 2020; Chang & Chung, 2015; Crissman et al., 2017; Eastwood et al., 2021; Fernández-Rouco et al., 2017; Kia et al., 2021; Nadal et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2019; Travers, 2021).

The intersectional stigma approach combines theories on social stigma and intersectionality. The former concept refers to the multilevel process of labelling, stereotyping and rejecting human differences as a form of social control (Link & Phelan, 2001; Phelan et al., 2008; White Hughto et al., 2015). Intersectionality

theory, in turn, asserts that varied types of oppression generate and mutually constitute one another to sustain a complex matrix of power rooted in – and actively maintained by – social structures and institutional systems (Wesp et al., 2019).

Intersectional stigma manifests itself on multiple levels. On a structural level, stigmas are expressed through various structures of domination (e.g. cisgenderism, heteronormativity and racism) that influence political terrains, reducing, for instance, the number of public policies that seek to protect transgender people's rights (Platt & Milam, 2018). On an interpersonal level, the dynamics of intersectional stigma are configured by differentiation processes (Wesp et al., 2019) that encourage dominant groups' members to be physically and emotionally violent in their daily interactions with oppressed population segments (Barrientos, 2016; Rodríguez Madera, 2022). On an individual level, intersectional stigma shapes transgender people's embodiment, implying, among other things, that they experience anxiety or embarrassment about – and thus avoid – participating in specific social activities (e.g. tourism) due to past negative events (Monterrubio et al., 2022). The existing literature has extensively documented how intersectional stigma is associated with multiple adverse outcomes including depression, anxiety, suicidality, substance abuse, human immunodeficiency virus, violence and premature death (Griner et al., 2020; Johns et al., 2019; Klemmer et al., 2021; Newcomb et al., 2020; Rodríguez Madera, 2022; Wirtz et al., 2020).

Transgender men are marginalised and thus constrained in Latin America's tourism. To understand this phenomenon from an intersectional stigma approach, researchers must focus on these individuals' experience of embodiment, that is, how transgender people incorporate and resist oppression (Wesp et al., 2019). This theoretical framework emphasises the following three aspects to understand tourism activities' implications for transgender men.

First, not all transgender individuals are equally impacted by social inequalities (de Vries, 2015; Monterrubio et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2015; Wesp et al., 2019). These phenomena's effects are directly related to transgender people's membership in socially stigmatised categories. The latter include, besides the most obvious ones (i.e. gender, race, ethnicity and social class), disabilities or a failure to meet the West's most widely applied aesthetic standards (de Vries, 2015; Monterrubio et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2015).

Second, male transgender embodiment specifically has a history of invisibility and gender-related stigma

related to their female biological sex. Gender is a set of externally imposed norms that prescribe desirable behaviours to – and proscribe others for – individuals according to morally arbitrary characteristics linked to biological reproduction (Reilly-Cooper, 2016). These norms are the cornerstone of heteropatriarchy, which is a binary gender hierarchy with only two possible positions variously described as maleness over femaleness, man over woman or masculinity over femininity. Based on this logic, transgender men fail to achieve the ideal forms of masculinity by being unable, in most cases, to free themselves entirely from their feminine traits. These individuals thus have non-compliant bodies that prevent them from attaining the standard biological features required by binary gender and its stereotypical aesthetics (Li et al., 2021).

Third, gender hierarchies combine with other power structures that sustain social inequities and shape social experiences at the micro level, thereby producing interactions that reduce transgender men's opportunities and resources. In the case of tourism, these hierarchies directly affect these individuals' chances of enjoying the benefits of travel-related experiences. Research informed by an intersectional stigma theoretical framework, therefore, offers a deeper understanding of the complex phenomenon of transgender embodiment and the associated intersecting oppression. This approach is a fundamental step towards problematising and assigning responsibility to the social structures that foster injustices against transgender men. The tourism industry, in particular, can greatly benefit from this type of analysis.

Transgender in tourism

Tourism can potentially enhance socially marginalised groups' quality of life (McIntosh, 2020) because they must often overcome significant impediments and barriers to improve their everyday lifestyle. However, the transgender population was largely ignored by tourism experts until quite recently (Monterrubio et al., 2020; Monterrubio et al., 2021; Olson & Reddy-Best, 2019; Reddy-Best & Olson, 2020). In addition, Shakibaei and Vorobjovas-Pinta (2022) observe that research from non-Western perspectives remains limited, especially in societies that categorise sexual and gender diverse individuals as legally and socially punishable.

Tourism researchers have also often included transgender individuals under the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) umbrella but without clearly differentiating between these categories (Hattingh, 2021; Southhall & Fallon, 2011). This lapse is somewhat understandable given that LGBT individuals and communities

have all experienced various forms of oppression and discrimination throughout history and have together actively engaged in political and social actions (Harper & Schneider, 2003). Nonetheless, transgender people have unique concerns and challenges when travelling or participating in tourism activities.

Zimman (2009) argues that gender identity and expression issues need to be distinguished from sexual orientation ones. Monterrubio et al. (2021) further assert that gender expression is permanently exposed to the public gaze, so transgender travellers tend to be more vulnerable in unfamiliar environments. The cited authors, nonetheless, found that access to leisure, tourism and travel is vital to transgender people's well-being.

Tourism experiences are inseparable from tourists' emotions and can positively affect their physical health and longevity (Godovykh & Ridderstaat, 2020), but this connection can also have the reverse effect. With some exceptions, tourism research has predominantly focused on positive emotional experiences (Hosany et al., 2020), yet studies of transgender populations highlight that many experiences generate negative emotions (e.g. fear, anxiety and insecurity) associated with gender embodiment (Monterrubio et al., 2020). For example, Shakibaei and Vorobjovas-Pinta (2022) explored gender diversity, mobility and access to leisure activities in Istanbul and confirmed that transgender individuals routinely face violence, discrimination and harassment when using public transport. The cited study revealed that fellow passengers, drivers, security staff and other members of the public are mainly responsible for this violence.

Olson and Reddy-Best (2019) and Reddy-Best and Olson (2020) similarly report that transgender people feel afraid of and anxious about being discriminated against, mistreated, harassed or even murdered. These researchers suggest that, to cope with fear and anxiety, transgender individuals may engage in diverse tactics, including hiding their transgender expression while travelling or simply avoiding tourism. In addition, Lubitow et al. (2017) and Weintrob et al. (2021) verified that transgender individuals have to adopt coping strategies to travel safely, which can include more expensive alternatives, avoiding routes, travelling at certain times, ignoring harassers or relocating on or leaving buses and trains. Lubitow et al. (2017), in turn, showed that socioeconomic status, race and disability are intersecting systems of oppression that shape transgender people's social mobility.

Other studies with transgender participants (Monterrubio et al., 2020; Monterrubio et al., 2021) have also documented negative emotions (e.g. apprehension,

unease and uncertainty) associated with tourism experiences. Negative occurrences include, among others, being questioned about why their gender expression does not match their official identification and prohibited from using gendered bathrooms or other gendered recreational facilities such as swimming pools. Transgender individuals, in general, experience mistreatment – anything from misgendering to verbal and physical violence – in multiple circumstances.

Cisgender men and women produce and consume tourism differently due to variations in their gender construction and socialisation (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015), so the assumption can be made that the same occurs with transgender men and women. However, to the authors' knowledge, no study in the scarce literature on tourism in the transgender population has specifically focused on transgender men's experiences.

Transgender males' tourism can be viewed through many lenses. The present research relied on a framework informed by intersectional stigma theory as it was formulated with reference to marginalised groups such as transgender communities. This approach provided a theoretical framework within which transgender men's leisure travel experiences could be examined, with a focus on constraints and opportunities. The latter are essential to creating environments that allow transgender men to participate in equitable and dignified ways in travel and tourism.

Research context: overview of transgender people in Latin America

According to the IACHR, transgender people in many Latin American countries in 2018 continued to be victims of violence, exclusion and marginalisation, which contributes to transgender women's low life expectancy of 35 years (Williams, 2015). For instance, Brazil's National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals reports that the legislation created to protect transgender populations has failed to have the expected effect given that this country still has the most murders of transgender people in the world. In 2021, Brazil registered 140 of these killings (i.e. 135 transfeminine individuals and 5 transmasculine people) (Benevides, 2022).

Other common denominators of transgender people's vulnerability in Latin American countries currently are a lack of healthcare and employment and education opportunities, as well as rejection by their society and family (Latin American and Caribbean Network of Trans People, 2019). These problems are part of transgender men's reality in Guatemala and Mexico, so these two populations were selected as the present research's specific focus. According to the Colectivo

Trans-formación (2019), Guatemala's transgender men as a group have remained invisible and thus excluded from political, social and cultural life. In Mexico, transgender men do not suffer as much violence or discrimination in public life as transgender women do because the former also tend to remain hidden (Hernández & Winton, 2018). However, their suicide attempts have been recorded and traced back to the discrimination, exclusion and violence these individuals experience (Mendoza et al., 2015, as cited in Hernández & Winton, 2018).

Many individuals with marginalised intersecting identities (e.g. sexual and gender) have become activists to counteract intolerance, marginalisation and aggression's effects on transgender populations in different Latin American contexts. Activism seeks to pressure institutions and the central government to guarantee more and better legal instruments – and their enforcement – with which to fight against abuse. One sign of progress in the transgender communities of some Latin American countries such as Mexico has been new laws that recognise that people with diverse gender identities have the right to full access to health, education and work (Drazer, 2021). However, transgender identities are still not protected by Guatemala's government (Castillo, 2022). Thus, many countries in Latin America continue to be characterised by discrimination against and oppression of transgender individuals.

Methods

The present study sought to explore transgender men's tourism experiences in Latin America in order to formulate recommendations for how inclusive tourism practices can be implemented. According to Jordan and Gibson (2004), qualitative interviews must be conducted to generate more profound knowledge about tourism experiences' meaning for individuals. Therefore, eight in-depth interviews were scheduled with self-identified transgender men in Guatemala and Mexico. The interviews were conducted in 2019 and 2021 in person or online.

The interviewees were recruited mainly through snowball sampling and the research team's pre-existing contacts. Prior research has shown that getting transgender men to participate in studies is more difficult than enlisting transgender women (Dutton et al., 2008). Due to the small initial sample of participants, the research team recruited more interviewees through their own connections. More specifically, an invitation to participate in the study was posted on Facebook to reach the relevant groups – a strategy that proved successful.

An interview guide was developed that explored, among other things, the participants’ tourism experiences and related constraints due to their transgender identity and expression. All the interviews were recorded on audio tracks with the interviewees’ consent and then transcribed and analysed using the categories identified in the relevant literature, especially those related to social stigma in transgender populations.

Studies of minority groups require researchers to pay close attention to their relationships with participants and the attendant power dynamics. The latter are particularly important when the researchers are part of a majority group in the surrounding society because they may be unable to understand fully the experiences of minority groups’ members (Jordan & Gibson, 2004, p. 220). The present researchers, therefore, had to examine their own positionality.

The team members who had a cisgender identity had extensively read the literature on transgender individuals and, more specifically, on their social status in Latin America. In addition, the researchers had taken professional courses and workshops focusing on related transgender topics. One team member had already worked directly with the transgender population in the region under study for more than 20 years. Two other researchers are part of the LGBT community – a minority group that can empathise with transgender people. The team also reflected constantly on their possible gender bias throughout the research process.

Results

Contextualised experiences

Table 1 presents the participants’ sociodemographic profile, using pseudonyms to protect their identities. The sample included transgender men between 23 and 49 years old, most of whom had had an education focused around professional degrees. Although these statistics cannot be generalised to other parallel populations, the profile confirms that transgender males tend to have higher educational levels than transgender females in some Latin American countries (Monterrubio et al., 2020).

The interviewees had varied occupations ranging from manager to graphic designer, bricklayer and painter, and five individuals earned an income of 600 United States dollars or less per month. In this sense, the present study provided further evidence of the pattern of generalised labour exclusion affecting transgender people in Latin America (OAS & IACHR, 2020). Most participants in the current research were single, and six reported having no formal religion. In addition, seven interviewees did not have children. These findings are again consistent

Table 1. Participants’ profile.

Participant	Country	Age	Education	Occupation	Civil status	Monthly income in United States dollars	Children	Religion	Official identification	Body changes
Andy	Mexico	26	University	Restaurant assistant	Single	300	None	None	Male	Hormones
Dan	Mexico	23	Secondary school	Activist/influencer	Single	400	None	Catholic	Male	Hormones
Joan	Guatemala	49	Vocational	Manager	Civil partnership	2,000	Two	None	Female	Hormones, hysterectomy, mastectomy
Max	Guatemala	28	University	Service promoter	Single	Not available	None	None	Female	Hysterectomy, mastectomy, hormones
Pavel	Mexico	27	Vocational	Graphic designer	Single	600	None	None	Male	Hormones, mastectomy, hysterectomy
Romeo	Guatemala	28	University	Delivery courier	Single	325	None	None	Female	Hormones, mastectomy
Sandro	Mexico	26	University	Bricklayer and painter	Single	400	None	None	Male	Hormones
Tadeo	Guatemala	25	Postgraduate	Head of non-governmental organisation	In a relationship	1,300	None	Buddhist	Female	Hormones, mastectomy

with other transgender populations' previously reported social demographics (Rosser et al., 2007).

All the participants had taken hormones, and five had undergone gender-affirming surgery including a mastectomy and/or hysterectomy. The four interviewees from Mexico had also rectified the gender listed in their official identity documents. The Guatemalan men all still had an officially assigned female gender because, as these four participants confirmed, Guatemala's government does not recognise transgender identities. The stigmatisation of transgender people overall appears to have worsened in this country due to initiatives that have restricted children and adolescents' right to education about gender identities (Castillo, 2022).

Marginalisation and constraints in tourism

Transgender men in Guatemala and Mexico – or at least those interviewed for this research – are often subjected to stigmatisation and, with it, exclusion and fear. Transgender males encounter discrimination in different areas of their daily lives. Many experiences derive from structural and interpersonal constraints, including the central government and society's failure to recognise their gender identity.

For example, in sport activities, Andy recounted how his development as an athlete, which included travelling to competitions, was limited because he had to compete against women. He was perceived as a woman by others, so he was not allowed to enter sport events for men. The femininity associated with his gender identity was thus an axis of inequality that prevented him from fully participating in sport competitions. Dan, in turn, recalled how some family members have misgendered him by using his assigned female name. He understands his family's behaviour is due to traditional customs, but he acknowledged feeling bad sometimes about being misgendered.

Max has been questioned by others in public spaces during daily activities because his official identification contradicts his gender identity and expression. He commented, 'I have problems going to shopping centres, gyms or leisure clubs because my identification [document] is still not in order and people question me.' Tadeo's experiences show that he is discriminated against in everyday situations and important areas such as health. At the time of this study, he had not yet had his name corrected, so he said, 'they did not want to accept my card to pay for things, and I also had problems at the bank. . . and I have also had several experiences of discrimination in hospitals and gynaecological clinics.'

For transgender men, tourism is similarly marred by stigmatisation, discrimination and fear, as well as exposure to risk. This research revealed that transgender males, especially those who have not updated their official identity documents, experience high anxiety levels during their trips. The mismatch between their identification and gender expression generates anxiety and fear. Joan stated:

The problem [arises] when I travel – as in my daily life – in any situation where I have to show my identity document because I have to explain why my gender expression is one thing and my document indicates a different one.

Tadeo has had many international travel experiences because he travels for work, training, leisure and fun. His accounts reflect transgender men's worries about and dread of structural constraints, particularly in regions worldwide where their gender identities are not recognised and respected. This participant shared that:

It was very difficult for me to travel to Switzerland because I had to go through four airports, and I had not changed my name. . . Here in Guatemala, you can't change gender, so, for me, it was a very awful and stressful experience. They asked me if it was me, and I had to explain a lot of things. . . It was just very uncomfortable to be called by my legal name. That trip was very difficult. . . My bus trips to the borders of Honduras and El Salvador put me in a very vulnerable situation because they looked at my document or my passport, and people laughed or told me it wasn't me. They ignored me, so it was quite unpleasant to go through there. . . It made me very nervous because land borders, especially in Central America, are usually very crime-ridden and hostile places with a lot of violence, so I was very afraid to go through there and that the police would stop me or think that I was impersonating someone's identity and then treat me badly, criminalise me or ask me for money to let me pass. . . Yes, it was quite unpleasant.

Tadeo also reported that, as a transgender person and, simultaneously, of Central American ancestry, visas are extremely difficult to apply for if one's gender expression does not coincide with the official documents issued in one's country. This finding thus suggests that, when transgender identities intersect with other systems of oppression and domination – ethnicity in this case – the negative experiences associated with travel and tourism can multiply. Tadeo added, due to the interpersonal difficulties that he experiences during his trips, he makes reservations under his wife's name and uses her documents to avoid situations that cause anxiety and to reduce the risk of problems.

Another issue that transgender men have during their trips is closely linked to showing their naked bodies to

others. These experiences occur mainly when they are on beaches or at swimming pools, which for them present a predicament. On the one hand, men are seldom allowed to use swimming pools with their shirt on, but transgender males who have not undergone a mastectomy cannot go topless because their naked chest is perceived as that of a woman. Dan asserted that his beard and masculine voice give him more confidence in public, but he has found that:

Putting on a swimsuit is complicated when I go to beaches or swimming pools. Most of the men who go to the beach only wear shorts and leave their chest bare. For us [transgender men], it is complicated. There are places like swimming pools or even hotels that do not let you enter the pool with a shirt. . . . That makes me feel a bit bad.

The desire to go topless mainly in tourism and leisure spaces has led some transgender males to opt for mastectomy. Pavel recounted his experience as follows:

When I entered the beach topless, people found it strange and said, 'This boy has boobs, but he has very hairy legs.' It was strange for them. . . . It was after that trip that I decided to go for a mastectomy.

Those individuals who have already had a mastectomy enjoy aquatic spaces with greater safety. Romeo shared, 'what I like the most is when I go to the beach or the pool. That's where I take off my shirt. It's like "wow, this is me," but now I do it safely and calmly.'

Other limitations that some interviewees have experienced during their trips are being barred from men's toilets, which elevates their anxiety and sense of being at risk. Some participants have even been expelled from the men's facilities. Andy argued that moving towards masculinity means having certain privileges, but he then asserted:

Where I still feel insecure is in public toilets. . . . If a man realises that I urinate sitting down or that I don't have a penis, my life could be at risk at that very moment, whether in Mexico City, in the north or in the south. In any part of the country, the same risks are run.

Transgender men thus find that, especially those whose ability to pass as male is limited or who are still at the beginning of their transition process, being read as women places them in dangerous situations in both tourism and everyday life. This finding has been confirmed by previous empirical research (Abelson, 2014).

Tourism and transgender identity

Tourism can be a setting in which constraints derived from structural conditions or interpersonal relationships negatively shape transgender men's tourism experiences.

However, tourism also provides these men with opportunities to reaffirm their gender identity and perform selected characteristics of their masculinity.

Some interviewees are fully aware that they were raised as women, which means they do not have a typical man's social and cultural background. They feel the need to reaffirm continuously their gender and, more specifically, their masculinity in order to be accepted within male groups and, quite importantly, to reduce the possibility of discrimination and heightened risk. Although some transgender men go unnoticed, they live in fear of being discovered. They have found that masculinising their bodies and adopting male behaviours in their daily life or during their trips provides them with greater social legitimacy as men.

Transgender men thus seek to reinforce and legitimise their masculine identity, but they tend to be selective in which traits of masculinity they adopt. These individuals reject toxic, sexist and patriarchal behaviours because they are aware of how women are treated (i.e. mainly in their childhood). Andy explained that:

I like being a man who was raised as a woman. . . . From my birth onward, I experienced a patriarchal system that included street harassment, the fact that doors were closed to one because of one's gender, that one was treated as inferior, that one had to adopt a submissive role as part of Mexican culture. . . . Those experiences have made me a different man today. . . . and I always keep that in mind, including on my trips.

For those individuals who have had a mastectomy, showing off their masculinised top during a beach vacation is extremely symbolic as they are read and recognised as men. Pavel reported, 'I went to Cozumel for a week with my mother and brother. I had the mastectomy. Then I was happy with life. I was shirtless, and everything was normal.'

Poria (2006) argues that tourism spaces can provide gays and lesbians with anonymity in environments that give them a sense of security and reduce the fear of being seen and recognised. For some transgender men, the anonymity that tourism provides is also significant but for different reasons. Tourism offers these individuals anonymous spaces in which their identity or expression as a woman has never existed for others because tourism allows these men to interact with completely new people who never knew them as women. These men are simply individuals with a past unknown to anyone. Sandro has suffered discrimination in his daily life, so he shared:

I like to go to different places where they don't know who I am and where they don't know anything about my past. . . . I can go to [new] places and be myself, without people telling me, 'When you came last time,

you were someone else.' That's why I always like to go to new places. I hardly visit places I've already visited [as a woman]. I don't like it when they recognise me and tell me, 'I knew you as someone else, and now you come and tell me you're someone else.'

Going unnoticed as a transgender man during their travels can even become the most beautiful, memorable experience of all. Joan said:

The most beautiful tourism experience I've had was when I went to Cuba with my wife. . . . We stayed at her house. . . . It was a wonderful trip because I was highly respected and very loved. Of course, nobody knew that I was trans, and [I] simply passed as my wife's husband. I was just another cisgender person.

In this way, tourism confers an anonymity that allows transgender men to reinforce their identity as men because people who are unaware of their past do not question their gender expression.

Finally, tourism also provides some transgender males with opportunities to perform their masculinity, especially when travelling with their partner or female friends. Trips allow transgender men to take on the traditional roles of provider by paying bills at restaurants and protector by caring for their female partner, as well as being the decision maker. Pavel admitted that, at some point, he adopted macho attitudes and behaviours when travelling:

When we go on a trip, I am the man. I take care [of others]. I protect [them]. I decide the itinerary. I check the documents. I have to see that everything is in order, . . . and sometimes I drink more when I travel.

For some transgender men, tourism thus offers more than just opportunities for rest and fun, providing spaces where their current identity is socially recognised and validated because, due to anonymity, no other previous identity comes into question. In addition, tourism allows these men to perform selected traits of their masculinity.

Discussion

Tourism presents opportunities to become more human to the extent that it brings diverse people in contact with others and promotes mutual understanding and liking among them (Tomljenovic, 2010). However, the Latin American transgender men who participated in the present study provided narratives that show how, due to their gender embodiment, they have had experiences of stigmatisation and oppression that have limited their access to tourism's benefits. The constraints these individuals face confirm that tourism, instead of being an experience of transformation (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006)

and personal growth, is often instead an activity marred by problems and negative emotions. Most of the present research's interviewees provided narratives focused on their experiences of marginalisation for being transgender. However, especially in the context of international travel, the results show that the structures of domination associated with heteropatriarchy and cisgenderism intersect with other structures associated with xenophobia and racism, thereby creating inequalities in tourism activities (Moufakkir, 2015; Rose, 2012).

The current findings can be compared to the data gathered in previous studies on transgender women's tourism experiences. These two transgender populations clearly share various constraints. First, they experience fear and insecurity due to the possibility of being stigmatised and discriminated against in tourism destinations. Second, these individuals feel anxiety and fear when they expect potential problems with identity documents, and, last, transgender men and women face challenges in the use of facilities such as toilets and swimming pools (Monterrubio et al., 2020; Monterrubio et al., 2021).

One important difference is that no transgender male interviewee explicitly indicated fearing for his life when travelling to tourism destination. Their masculine gender identity and presentation can thus be understood as helping them to avoid harassment, discrimination and violence (Lubitow et al., 2017). The present results are unsurprising since the majority of transgender people murdered in Latin America are transgender women (TGEU, 2019). The argument can thus be made that these murders are yet another example of rampant violence against women and the feminine in patriarchal contexts (Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2019).

Notably, most of this violence is directed towards transgender women who live below the poverty level, which is a further example of the alignment of structures of domination associated with gender and social class (Moran & Sharpe, 2004). This pattern is confirmed by how transgender men can enjoy, to a certain extent, the privileges of masculinity for two important reasons: their male gender embodiment and higher levels of formal education and income than transgender women (Rodríguez Madera et al., 2015). A more privileged socioeconomic status could, therefore, mitigate the severity of the transphobic violence to which these women are subjected.

Transgender individuals also lack access to transgender inclusive toilets and swimming pools without strict regulations, and sensitive security protocols at airports are a daunting obstacle. These problems, unfortunately, are just one symptom of a much larger issue related to

stigmatisation and oppression at a structural level. In Latin America, various countries continue to offer little or no legal support to ensure transgender people's rights are respected, including forbidding changes in identity documents. Just a few countries, including Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Uruguay, have passed gender identity laws that allow transgender people to update their documents to reflect their names and gender identities (Campbell, 2019).

The present study's participants expressed concerns about substantive threats to their well-being due to the quite slow pace at which public policies in the Latin America region have changed. This situation shows how central governments perpetuate legislative violence against their transgender population by reinforcing paternalistic and cis- and heteronormative regulations that have a negative impact on transgender people's basic identity (Jain & Kartik, 2020). The generalised resistance to change especially affects transgender individuals of Mayan descent (i.e. an ethnic group that makes up most of Guatemala's population), who are profoundly marginalised and mistreated in their country due to both their ethnicity and gender identity (Rodríguez Madera, 2022).

The verbal accounts collected for the present study alluded to the use of men's toilets and swimming pools in hotels, which is an excellent example of how intersectional stigma is experienced on an interpersonal level. This problem is especially common for those who have a gender embodiment that makes passing as male difficult and who do not comply with the expected aesthetics codes. Social anxiety arises due to how bodies should appear to others to be considered socially desirable (e.g. white, cared for and congruent with that individual's gender). This pressure has been given a legitimacy reflected in varied regulations and attempts to erase bodies that fail to meet aesthetic standards (Pausé et al., 2020). Transgender men have experiences of being expelled from restrooms or swimming pools due to their embodiment, which can have disastrous implications on an emotional level and for these individuals' dignity.

The current research's participants expressed their concerns and limitations related to tourism quite strongly, but some interviewees also reflected on how they resisted oppression and could even find positive aspects of this process. These stories highlighted opportunities to reaffirm their masculine gender identity in distant places where they do not know anyone and to enjoy daily activities that are difficult or impossible in their place of origin due to restricted social codes. For example, these spaces of freedom allow transgender men to assume roles historically assigned to males as

provider entities (e.g. paying the bill and processing documents) or, for those who have had a mastectomy, to show their naked breastless torso. In new tourism destinations, no one from the past has a memory of what an individual's body was like before or who that person was.

The data collected expand the scarce literature on transgender men in tourism by revealing the particularities of their experiences and constraints, which is an essential step towards reflecting on how to foster an emancipatory tourism culture for socially stigmatised and oppressed groups. As can be expected in any research, this study had various limitations, including interviews with a few individuals from only two Latin American countries. However, by listening to these participants' voices, the approach applied produced results that offer fertile ground for thinking about tourism's transformative possibilities. The diverse stakeholders of tourism (e.g. governments, non-profit organisations and hospitality service providers) can create equitable, dignified tourism environments for transgender men by following eight recommendations.

First, support initiatives should aim to achieve structural changes that favour opportunities for – and protect the rights of – transgender people. Public policies must be changed to strength tourism services targeting this population segment, including addressing one of these individuals' greatest concerns: identity documents with a noncongruent gender.

Second, a tourism agenda needs to be developed that focuses on the transgender population. Many LGBT-related tourism Web pages approach gender and sexual minorities as if they were similar populations. The academic literature has already shown that these groups are highly diverse, so tourism service providers have to pay attention to transgender people's different tourism motivations and needs (Monterrubio et al., 2020; Monterrubio et al., 2021).

Third, international Internet websites already monitor the transgender population's rights, and the associated organisations usually publish data on Latin America's levels of violence. These websites could also include tourism pockets in different countries and cities that transgender travellers can enjoy more safely. These organisations should also report information on other existing axes of inequality (e.g. race and ethnicity) to reduce these tourists' vulnerability.

Fourth, gender-neutral toilets are considered by some to be a sign of the times, which implies that more and more places (e.g. restaurants and offices) could have these restrooms so that transgender people feel safer and more comfortable. Legislation has been passed in various Latin American countries that favours inclusion

initiatives' proliferation (e.g. gender-neutral airport toilets), and each city's tourism organisations need to welcome transgender visitors more openly. Municipalities have to work together to meet this segment's needs.

Fifth, personnel need to be trained in how to handle transgender issues before working for transport security organisations, such as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in the United States. Agencies dealing with transgender affairs in different countries could also collaborate on this type of training to ensure it is more comprehensive.

Sixth, special training should be offered to transgender men who travel to help them develop coping strategies. For instance, some transgender men are unaware that wearing a packer, binder or any other restrictive or enhancing garment during trips could set off airport security machines. These individuals can be better prepared by knowing what to do if this happens (e.g. show a discreet notification card alerting the TSA screener of their transgender status), which could be extremely beneficial in terms of reducing anxiety and fear.

Seventh, Spanish-language campaigns or guidance resources need to be developed that focus on transgender tourism. Almost all of the Latin American region has Spanish as its primary language. This strategy would remove a major structural hurdle that deprives transgender people of information that can improve their travel experiences and, in some cases, literally save their life.

Last, the hospitality industry should be given guidelines for how to revise the relevant regulations to avoid not only gender-related stigmatisation but also other possible coexisting stigma. In this way, service providers can become more sensitive to their customers' realities and needs based on their transgender identities and the structures of inequality that may affect these individuals. The implementation of these measures would improve transgender men's level of access to tourism and travel and significantly contribute to bettering their quality of life.

Conclusion

Non-normative gender identities and expressions represent social and cultural challenges for most societies, so transgender people become victims of stigmatisation and oppression at a structural and interpersonal level (Lubitow et al., 2017; Monterrubio et al., 2020; Shakibaei & Vorobjovas-Pinta, 2021). Transgender individuals are often subjected to social exclusion, discrimination and violence in different spheres of life, which negatively affects their health and well-being (Rodríguez Madera,

2022). As a sociocultural phenomenon, tourism fails to offer spaces free of stigmatisation of and discrimination against minority groups – including transgender people. Instead, tourism reproduces social inequalities (Cole & Morgan, 2010).

The present study sought to identify more socially inclusive tourism practices by exploring transgender men's tourism experiences in Latin America, which are characterised by high levels of discrimination and violence towards these individuals (Monterrubio et al., 2022; Rodríguez Madera, 2022). The current results reveal that, although tourism in this region can contribute to transgender men's masculine identity, these individuals also experience discrimination, exclusion, anxiety and fear because of the social stigma they are subjected to when travelling. These experiences have a significant negative effect on transgender males' enjoyment of tourism and, potentially, on their physical and emotional well-being.

The literature review conducted for this research revealed that no other studies have exclusively examined transgender men's tourism experiences. Thus, the results contribute to academics' recognition of tourism as a gendered space in which stigma, discrimination and social inequality negatively affect transgender males' tourism consumption. In addition, transgender men have rarely been included in studies of men and masculinities in tourism (Abelson, 2014), so the present findings strengthen these men's visibility as male tourists who actively challenge, negotiate and potentially change the traditional binary gender norm in tourism environments. The results thus contribute to a broader and more diversified understanding of non-normative gender expressions, identities and relationships in tourism experiences.

The above findings underline the need to continue this and other parallel lines of research. Social stigma affects individuals with gender characteristics that diverge from the binary norm and the people who have close relationships with them (e.g. relatives) (Ostman & Kajellin, 2002), so future studies could examine the tourism experiences of transgender men's travelling companions. Transgender males are actors in tourism both as tourists and locals, which means that researchers need to explore how local transgender males experience tourism as either service providers or residents who interact with tourists in multiple diverse ways and the related gender issues.

Limitations of the study

The authors acknowledge that the sample obtained for this study is not representative of the male transgender

population in Latin America. For this reason, this study's results cannot be generalised to the transgender population of the region; as a result, the conclusions and practical implications of this research should be taken with due caution. In addition, the fact that some interviews were conducted electronically limits the depth with which the tourism experiences of the participants were explored.

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