Article

Grindr Tourism Among Tourists, Locals, and Immigrants: Dating App Impacts for Social Relations, Gay Tourism, and Digital Convergence

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Abstract

Dating app tourism is a phenomenon that intersects both digital mobile media applications and tourism networks. As such, it represents a new but little-examined frontier in the study of sexuality, technology, and identity formation. Using a qualitative sociological approach, this exploratory study identifies Grindr tourism practices and their consequences for gay tourism, tourist-local relations, and digitally mediated social life. With Tel Aviv as the research site, Grindr tourism practices were analyzed using 19 in-depth interviews and six audio diaries. The concept of embedded learning is used to understand the communication that results from contemporary mobile media-integrated tourism. Grindr tourism practices are viewed as mutually beneficial by tourists, locals, and immigrants. Findings indicate that Grindr tourism contributes to tourists' embedded learning about travel destinations, immigrants' acclimation and friendship networks, and locals' self-ascribed cosmopolitan, multicultural identities. The research also uncovered wider issues affecting sexuality, communication, migration movements, ethnicity, and the economic bodies that support large-scale tourism. Specifically, Grindr is used as a tool to arrange independent, mobile, non-institutionalized travel that serves as an alternative to LGBT + tourism industry institutions. Not only is Grindr tourism indicative of shifting travel practices, but it also reflects dating apps' overarching tendency toward the convergence of multiple social functions into one platform.

Keywords

dating app, gay tourism, gender and sexuality, Grindr, LGBT +

Introduction

Grindr is the world's largest image-based dating app aimed at gay, bisexual, and queer men looking to meet other men (Grindr, 2020). Yet there is little understanding of "off-label" (Duguay, 2019) adaptations of dating apps for purposes beyond dating, such as their use for international tourism. This article investigates how Grindr is used during travel, a phenomenon colloquially known as "Grindr tourism," by examining Grindr tourism practices among tourists, immigrants, and locals in Tel Aviv. Grindr tourism has implications for the future of the tourism industry, globally worth 5.8 billion USD in 2021 (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2022), and can shed insight on tourism practices that are potentially in the process of changing due to the availability of dating apps. This is especially important in light of the coronavirus pandemic as travel transitions away from financially hit institutions and professional tours with

upfront costs, toward independent arrangements and mobile, digitally mediated travel practices enabled by dating apps, as this research will show. Stemming from a larger qualitative study conducted on tourists, locals, and immigrants who use Grindr in Tel Aviv, this article aims to answer the following: What are the practices among tourists, locals, and immigrants that constitute Grindr tourism, and what are the impacts of Grindr tourism practices for the role of dating apps in the tourism industry and social life?

Tel Aviv is a rich fieldwork site for examining Grindr tourism. As a diverse city with a multitude of gay institutions such as bars, community centers, and annual events, Tel Aviv is a

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popular destination for gay tourists (Misgav, 2015, pp. 1214, 1224). Tourism can have social value to both tourists and host destinations due to the cross-cultural exchange it fosters (Besculides et al., 2002, pp. 306, 314). Tourism is also economically significant to the country, and large numbers of tourists visit year-round, numbering 4.5 million in 2019 (Raz-Chaimovich, 2020) and about 2.5 million in 2022 (Nagler, 2022), with the national tourism ministry expecting a pandemic recovery. In 2017-2018, nine out of 10 international visitors to Tel Aviv traveled independently (Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality, 2018a), coming to Tel Aviv on their own rather than through tour groups or organizations. Some of these tourists are using dating apps to arrange their own travel experiences. It is tacit knowledge in the field site that much of the initial contact between gay tourists and locals looking to meet takes place on (Grindr Kelly, 2019).

Situating Grindr Tourism in the Literature

Given that the phenomenon of Grindr tourism is a novel area of research, to situate the study prior research on Grindr is discussed, followed by prior research on gay tourism. Three main gaps are identified, which pertain to the overlap of dating apps in other arenas of social life, Grindr tourism's impact on tourist-local social relations, and dating apps' implications for gay tourism.

A common cultural assumption is that Grindr is used solely to arrange casual sex. Yet studies have found that people use Grindr for multiple social reasons (Brubaker et al., 2014; Shield, 2017; Wu & Trottier, 2022), many of which are evident in the "looking for" drop-down menu options on Grindr profiles whereby users can state their intentions as "chat, dates, friends, networking, relationship, and right now" (a euphemism for casual sex). Interactions on Grindr may be situated within contexts of sex and relationships, but my intention in this article is to highlight other interactions that diverge from the "label" of casual sex often associated with Grindr (although these interactions may occur within relations that are sometimes sexual, and in such instances in the data, this will be discussed). "Off-label" (Duguay, 2019) uses of dating apps, that is, the use of dating apps for purposes beyond dating, have been explored by Duguay (2019) in her study of the political uses of Tinder. Other "off-label" uses of dating apps have been explored in terms of politics in China (Chan, 2021), immigrant belonging in Copenhagen (Shield, 2017), and friendship networks and health information networks (Byron, 2020). Such scholarship begets the first gap this research will address, in that it points to the question of how Grindr practices might reveal ways that dating apps impact other unexpected aspects of social life.

Despite this small yet growing body of research on the uses of dating apps for reasons beyond dating, the use of Grindr as part of tourism has not been studied. Some research exists on Tinder tourism from the perspective of heterosexual women (James et al., 2019) and Australian tourists but not locals (Leurs & Hardy, 2019). Literature on sex tourism tends to examine heterosexual, gendered dynamics of Global North men seeking out poorer women and sex workers in the Global South (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016, p. 412). While exploitation is still a possibility in the context of this study, the aspects of shared gender (in general) and the specific space of Tel Aviv affect tourist, local, and immigrant dynamics, as will be addressed. Much of the literature on gay tourism focuses on gay tourists, but not gay locals (e.g., Blichfeldt et al., 2011; Hughes & Deutsch, 2010; Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016), and does not take into account how new media technologies such as dating apps impact tourism. Yet most of the research on Grindr does not consider tourism (e.g., Blackwell et al., 2014; Bonner-Thompson, 2017; Brubaker et al., 2014; Corriero & Tong, 2016; Licoppe et al., 2015). This second gap between the studies of tourism and Grindr could be bridged by looking at which dating app practices constitute Grindr tourism, and correspondingly how these Grindr tourism practices impact gay tourists, gay locals, and gay immigrants.

Grindr tourism exists in the context of traditional institutionalized travel linked to a gay identity (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016). I refer to this as the Gay Tourism Industry (GTI). By using the term, I aim to have a linguistic catch-all to discuss the collection of multiple stratified formal organizations and related dimensions of the tourism industry aimed at gay tourists (similar to Big Pharma—see Cacchioni, 2015). The GTI historically affected practices of travel, encouraging gays and lesbians to experience travel offerings based on sexuality through the form of gay destinations, tours, companies, and cruises. In earlier decades, such institutionalized travel services were welcomed because homophobia was rife (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016). Through resources such as guidebooks and arranged tours, the GTI helped tourists determine if the tour, hotel, or travel destination would be gay-friendly. However, with the increasing acceptance of homosexuality in many societies, gay-friendliness has become an implicit expectation and has fallen in tourists' rankings of importance on tourism and hospitality surveys (Community Marketing, 2016). Literature supports the notion that there is a wide range of travel motivations for LGBT + people and that sexuality and/or seeking sex is not the primary motivation for travel (Blichfeldt et al., 2011; Hughes & Deutsch, 2010; Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016). As Blichfeldt et al. (2011) summarize, most "choose a holiday destination on the basis of their personal interests and past experiences and not because of their sexuality" (p. 11). Because of the wide range of motivations for travel besides a desire for what might be considered a typical gay destination, gay identity plays a complex yet understudied role in contemporary travel experiences. It can be an aspect of some tourists' experiences but does not necessarily define their travel overall. Scholarship indicates that in practice, people who are gay dip in and out of institutional gay spaces while traveling

(Blichfeldt et al., 2011; Community Marketing, 2016); Grindr may be a way of facilitating this. Literature suggests that interest in traditional gay travel institutions that prioritize sexual identity appears to be waning. Yet the use of Grindr while traveling is commonplace as is the wider tendency to use other dating apps as part of a travel experience (the Tinder Explore feature is an example of this (James et al., 2019; Leurs & Hardy, 2019). Little is known about whether or how Grindr reconfigures traditional GTI tourism institutions created to cater for sexuality-based travel. This highlights the third gap that will be addressed—namely that Grindr's role in tourism relative to the traditional GTI has not been defined.

Theoretical Approach: Spatialized Grindr Practices, Interactions, and Relations

This research is theoretically founded on the conceptual interrelation, and therefore, interplay between practices, interactions, and relations. This study identifies Grindr practices (Schatzki, 1996) and considers the impacts of these practices on interactions (Goffman, 1959) and relations (Crossley, 2010; Heaphy, 2009) between tourists and local users. Practices are coordinated doings and sayings (Schatzki, 1996) that are recognizable sets of shared social understandings and norms. Practitioners also adapt and experiment over time and across space (Welch & Warde, 2015), thus creating Grindr practices. An interactionist approach considers individuals as agentic in creating society through their interactions and practices. Identities and norms are constructed through interactions with others, and some interactions occur as a result of practices. An interactionist approach focuses on bottom-up, micro-level processes during interactions (Carter & Fuller, 2015, p. 1) to explain social phenomena. This means investigating communication practices on Grindr as well as potential in-person interactions stemming from initial contact on the app. Relations are trajectories of interactions over time (Crossley, 2010, p. 35), often iterated through narratives such as those shared in interviews. Relations are not just repeated interactions; they imply past interactions and anticipated imagined futures that affect present interactions and communication, or what Crossley calls "trajectories." They involve the imagined and realized possibilities of the social connections built between tourists, immigrants, and locals via Grindr. While sex may be an aspect of the relations, my intention here is to widen the scholarly scope of relational possibilities that can occur as a result of Grindr, especially those specific to tourism. These relations cross multiple social boundaries—they are sometimes sexual, but also sometimes not. It is uncovering these more novel practices within digital intimacies and interactions facilitated by Grindr that is of interest, or how "intimacies manifest" (Cabañes & Uy-Tioco, 2022, p. 466). These points offer a theoretical strategy for conceptualizing Grindr tourism.

The research also relied on a spatial approach to Grindr, drawing on Cresswell's (1996) theory of space as a site of social practice where norms are defined and developed, along with Dourish's (2006) theorizing of new technologies as reconfiguring online and offline spatialities. Dourish (2006) argues that technological practices are also inherently spatial practices. In adopting a spatial approach, I emphasize the spatial transformations integral to the affordances of emerging technologies like dating apps. Attributes such as geolocation, instant chat, and proximity indicators facilitate new interactions immediately and on the go, which can swiftly turn into offline relations. Moreover, Grindr interactions have different relational trajectories as users must negotiate whether their Grindr interactions may result in meeting in person. Practices and interactions occur in the virtual context of spaces on Grindr, but they are also grounded in physical space due to Grindr's geolocative technology. Dourish (2006) observes that technologies "intersect" (pp. 301–306) spatialities and mobilities by intersecting physical and virtual social worlds. I later discuss how Grindr embeds tourist-local relations in the digital settings of the research context as well as how this affects experiences in the physical setting of Tel Aviv. Considering Grindr as a spatial intersection invites investigation into how it is used to for social purposes that extend beyond dating and sex. A spatial approach is in contrast to a community-based approach commonly found in tourism literature and some Grindr literature (Blackwell et al., 2014; Community Marketing, 2016; Hughes & Deutsch, 2010; Roth, 2016). Mainstream narratives about a singular community elide the nuances of the boundaries, roles, and prejudices that exist within LGBT + experiences of space (Valentine & Skelton, 2003). The spatial approach entailed examining "situatedness," such as the ways in which people situate themselves within intersections of their sexual, migration, and religious identities as a result of interacting with others on Grindr. Given that digital "social intimacies are entangled in hybridity" (Cabañes & Uy-Tioco, 2022, p. 464), I also consider the ways in which these identities are re-embedded in spaces of Grindr as tourist/immigrant/local through practices of Grindr tourism.

Method

Findings stem from a study of Grindr tourism as part of a PhD dissertation carried out from 2016-2020. Semi-structured interviews and audio diaries were conducted with 19 tourist and local Grindr users in Tel Aviv in 2017. Most social research on Grindr has focused on understanding Grindr users through semi-structured interviews (Blackwell et al., 2014; Bonner-Thompson, 2017; Brubaker et al., 2014; Jaspal, 2017; Miles, 2019), often done in combination with other methods such as content analysis or ethnographies (Licoppe et al., 2015; Shield, 2017). The audio diaries were an optional component of the study, as they required more time and effort. Audio diaries have been used in social

research, usually in combination with other methods such as interviews (Gibson et al., 2013; Hislop et al., 2005; Worth, 2009), but they have not been used to study Grindr before now. Audio diaries have been found to be effective at highlighting everyday experiences of personal life in real-time (Worth, 2009), as events are fresh on participants' minds; this was upheld in the research project. Future researchers may wish to consider audio diaries, as in this study they allowed respondents to share emotions while minimizing researcher impact on disclosures. Like other mixed-methods approaches to Grindr, the methods in this study have arguably led to enriched knowledge of situated uses of Grindr as they potentially address issues of hybridized (Miles, 2019) mobile, spatial, and geolocative aspects to Grindr use and how Grindr impacts "offline" social life.

Participants were recruited using snowball sampling with multiple entry points: online in public forums, through email, and via physical posters displayed around Tel Aviv. Six participants of the 19 who were interviewed elected to complete the audio diaries; they sent Whatsapp audio recordings to the researcher over the period of a week, reflecting on their practice of Grindr use each day. Semi-structured in-depth interviews took place after the audio diary period. Thematic analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was employed to examine and code the generated data.

In terms of demographics, of the 19 that partook in the study, five participants were tourists, seven were "born and raised" locals, and seven were immigrants who spoke about their current experiences as locals and their past experiences of being tourists in Tel Aviv before moving. The participation of people who identified as immigrants was unexpected, as the researcher had not assumed that immigrants took part in the tourism process before moving to the country. Eighteen self-identified as gay men, and one self-identified as a queer man. Participants were aged 18 to 38. Participants originated from a range of countries, identified in racially and ethnically diverse ways, and had a variety of religious and nonreligious affiliations. About half identified as Jewish; in this article, I refer to Jewish identity as "ethno-religious" (Shaul Bar Nissim & Brookner, 2019, p. 31) to capture the range of ways participants described this identity, as some identified as secular Jews. All names in this article are pseudonyms.

Although this exploratory research is based on small sample size, the combined methods provided rich, in-depth data regarding the practices of Grindr tourism. Other studies of Grindr that rely on interview methods also yield a comparable, small number of participants (Blackwell et al., 2014; Brubaker et al., 2014; Jaspal, 2017). Reticence may stem from notions of Grindr as private (Beninger, 2017; Miles, 2019; Shield, 2019) rather than solely due to this project's constraints; this is worth further study. In addition, users aged older than 40 did not come forward to participate. Although Grindr users tend to be under 40 (Clement, 2019; Van De Wiele & Tong, 2014), the experiences of older users are of scholarly interest as they may differ. Some local

minority groups such as Christian Israelis, Muslim Israelis, and Palestinians are missing from the data despite direct attempts to recruit them by circulating posters in areas of Tel Aviv in which they reside. In terms of locals, the data generated only provides insights into the experiences of the cultural majority in Tel Aviv, namely, secular and religious Israeli gay Jews (Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality, 2018b).

Findings and Discussion: Practices of Grindr Tourism

The data show that Grindr is used for diverse reasons in the tourism context that extend beyond arranging casual sexual encounters, even in the case of tourists visiting for a short term. This supports the findings in the literature on Grindr (Corriero & Tong, 2016; Shield, 2017; Wu & Trottier, 2022) about its multiple uses. Furthermore, this research indicates that Grindr tourism in fact entails a bundle of practices which will be expanded upon below, which can range from an interaction on Grindr as small as getting a restaurant recommendation from a local without ever meeting in person, or an in-person date that constitutes of a guided tour of the city. As a mediator for tourism, Grindr offers the potential for numerous interactional outcomes that must be negotiated between users. The following three sections identify Grindr tourism practices and the interactional outcomes of the practices from tourist, immigrant, and local perspectives. By experiencing Tel Aviv through Grindr, tourists engage with embedded learning; immigrants acclimate to their new countries through language-learning and friendship networks; and locals solidify their senses of themselves as knowledgeable, cosmopolitan, and multicultural.

Tourists' Embedded Learning

Tourists found it easy to interact with locals; tourist participants often remarked on the inordinate attention they receive from locals on Grindr because the locals considered tourists' presences in Tel Avivian Grindr spaces to be eye-catching, and locals reported paying special attention to profiles that said tourist. This builds on previous research that finds visuality, immediacy, and novelty core to the experience of Grindr by showing how these aspects affect tourist-local relational formations. Brubaker et al. (2014) point out that "seeing and connecting with new ties is at the core of Grindr's design" (p. 376) because the first screen that users see is the homescreen grid that reveals numerous new people in the area. As a result of their novelty, tourists receive extra attention on Grindr. Daniel, a 32-year-old immigrant states, "If you put the word tourist in" your Grindr profile, "you're going to get attention." Grindr is used to provide cues about one's tourist or local status. Tourist participants strategically communicate their migration status in usernames or biographies as well as expressing it visually through profile images and flag emojis. Grindr's customizable features are strategically used by tourists to rake in exceptional attention. For

tourists, Grindr is an easy way to meet locals and therefore engage more deeply with Tel Aviv itself.

Interactions with locals on Grindr lead to meaningful exchanges that provide opportunities for learning. These involve Grindr tourism practices of asking for restaurant recommendations, learning words in the local language, and inquiring into political controversies. For example, Shane, a 25-year-old American tourist, declares:

> I love using Grindr abroad to meet new people and to really get to know the culture. I feel like all these guys have taught me so much about Israel. I feel like I've learned so much about countries from Grindr, and . . . restaurants I never would have known to go to. . . They'll teach me new words . . . It's . . . a lot of learning.

Shane attributes his newfound knowledge to Grindr: Shane's use of Grindr for varied tourism engagements is typical of the study participants. They learn about Israeli culture, including local foods and the Hebrew language. According to tourist participants, talking to locals on Grindr and meeting them is part of the Grindr tourist experience globally, not just in Israel.

The tourist–local relations extend beyond friendship, sex, and romance to a multifaceted sensory and educational experience of the travel destination. Harry, a 33-year-old tourist from the UK, states that between meeting another tourist or another local on Grindr, he "prefer[s] to meet a local because then they could give . . . advice on where to go." Harry goes on to mention that he considers it "more friendly or interesting with a local because you can ask them questions politically." Many participants use Grindr as a way to get to know aspects of Israel that are controversial, including directly asking locals about politics in a destination infamous for its political situation. This can be considered a Grindr tourism practice, as it involves interactional Grindr goals based on tourist–local identities.

Grindr tourism enables an "embedded learning" that brings politics to life. Such learning is done from the ground up, and through understanding everyday lives and experiences of locals directly from the locals themselves, in the environment they are in. The narrative expressed by tourists is that they are being "taught" by the locals. Thus the locals are valued for their knowledge of wide issues of language, politics, and history. This may be tacit knowledge between locals. Yet relative to tourists, locals are "experts" who shape tourist experiences and teach tourists about their country if they choose to interact with tourists on Grindr and build relations with tourists. Notions of embedded learning, facilitated through Grindr, are also reflected from locals' perspectives as will be later discussed.

Building on how Grindr tourism can be the conduit of social and cultural learning, Raphael, a 29-year-old tourist from Southeast Asia, discusses learning about different levels of social acceptance around being gay through his Grindr

tourism. Raphael shares how, at first, he was uncomfortable with publicly kissing a local man he was sexually intimate with after having met on Grindr in Tel Aviv because "in my city, it's not allowed" so "I'm not comfortable with . . . holding hands with a guy . . . and then he kiss[es] you in public." But then he thought, "I feel no worries, no hesitation to do it" compared to home, where it is "socially not allowed." This made him feel "more relaxed" in Tel Aviv compared to "feeling humiliated" in his home country. He remarked about how learning about expressions being gay in Tel Aviv, a society that also has religious elements, overall helped him consolidate his sexual and religious identities as a gay man and practicing Catholic. While at first this may not appear to be directly a result of Grindr, in his audio diary Raphael shares how—like most tourists in the study—he primarily uses Grindr to meet his lovers in Tel Aviv, enabling him to have sexual interactions with locals that also have social ramifications for tourists.

Raphael's experience reflects those of other participants, who comment on how "welcoming" and open Tel Aviv was, not only in terms of social acceptance around homosexuality but also in terms of locals' directly interacting with tourists on Grindr by messaging them "welcome to Tel Aviv, enjoy your stay . . . [even] though we're just chatting online." Raphael's story supports research that new tourist destinations may provide gay men with "freedom from the constraints of society" (Vorobjovas-Pinta and Hardy, 2016, p. 411) in their home countries. Relations formed on Grindr have potential trajectories that go from spatial interactions that are private, such direct messages between users, which Raphael was comfortable with, to intimate interactions that take place in space more publicly, such as kissing and holding hands. Such experiences illustrate a re-embedding of how selves are embodied in physical spaces and become more open and affectionate with partners in the public space of the tourism destination compared to their home country. The space Grindr is situated in matters as it affects the potential interactions that can happen digitally and physically in different national contexts. Thus the tourists' experience of the location, and expressions of intimacy within digital and physical locations, are shaped by Grindr use.

Participants used the expression "meet new people," as stated in the examples above, to refer to Grindr tourism interactions. It is unclear whether this is just meeting someone online and having online chats, or meeting in person. The notion of meeting on Grindr is tacit; participants articulate experiences of interacting on Grindr whereby "meeting people" can range in meaning from only communicating via Grindr to meeting in person as a result of the conversation on Grindr. During the interview, Harry illustrates this point by mentioning that his choice of "where [he] went for dinner last night" was the result of a Grindr conversation where he asked a local for recommendations. Harry later clarified that when he asks for advice on where to go, he does not "need to meet them to do that, [he] can ask someone just by typing to

them." Earlier, he said that he would "prefer to meet a local" and be given "advice on where to go." In that instance, he meant meeting in person because his expectations of the in-person interaction went beyond advice to deeper conversations about politics. Harry points out that on Grindr one can just type for advice, or can choose to meet in person. There are a range of levels of spatial engagement and communication that Grindr tourism entails. Grindr is a means to obtain local "social companionship," while traveling, as Harry articulates, and the quality of this companionship is not necessarily distinguished as either offline or online. There is no distinction between virtual and physical meetings when it comes to Grindr tourism, in that it is not articulated as a relevant distinction. The various forms of tourist-local "meeting" interactions on Grindr blur spatial boundaries of virtual or in-person. Thus, interactional potential is expanded, as the relations between tourists and locals can be developed and are viewed as valuable without spatial differentiation between offline and online meetings.

Grindr facilitates a form of tourism pursued outside the guidebook (or for a more contemporary reference, a form beyond the Wikitravel webpage). People are eager to have individualized, customized, off-the-beaten-track tourist experiences (Bethapudi, 2013; Future Foundation, 2016; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018), and Grindr is a way these are arranged. Market research conducted for Expedia.com by the Future Foundation emphasizes that millennials are more likely to "travel independently" and prefer to "head off the beaten track and 'live like a local'" (Future Foundation, 2016, pp. 66–67). This phrase "live like a local" is often used in the tourism industry (Future Foundation, 2016; Paulauskaite et al., 2017; Quartz, 2019). Many participants share these aspirations of having local experiences while they are in Tel Aviv. The tourists themselves usually organize such liaisons independently, through Grindr. "Life as a local" can entail eating at restaurants popular with locals or meeting locals on Grindr. This can be meeting in person or, like Harry says, "getting advice on where to go" to have the most local experience of Israeli life. It can also mean expressing one's sexuality more freely compared to at home. Grindr provides a means of contact with locals through the practices, interactions, and relations it enables: that can be advice relayed via Grindr chat, social companionship while traveling alone, providing the space for couples to meet that lead to empowering public displays of affection, or the knowledge that comes from learning about particular locations from the people who infuse them with meaning. Tourism experiences are enhanced by this learning.

Immigrant Friendships, Acclimation, and Migration Goals

Potential and new immigrants use Grindr to build friendships, acclimate to the country, and facilitate their migration goals.

This is done through Grindr practices of communicating in Hebrew with locals and targeting locals who are open to relationships (and potentially marriage) with foreigners.

Of the immigrant participants, Sagi's story best captures the acclimation and friendship formation that are intertwined with his Grindr interactions with locals. 38-year-old Sagi has had experiences of using Grindr as a tourist from South America, then as a new immigrant to Israel, and subsequently as a local. When asked "how has Grindr made a difference in your life, if at all?" Sagi responded with:

> You may find this hilarious, but my Hebrew improved greatly . . . I learned a lot of it on Grindr . . . and it became a bit of a game for me. Can I get to the actual physical date, and they haven't figured out that I'm not a native speaker? And when I got to that level, I was so proud of myself.

Sagi was already present in the space of Grindr as a local in that he was living in Tel Aviv permanently, but he felt he had not fully inhabited the position of a local until he could communicate without giving away his status as an immigrant. He is "proud" of his linguistic accomplishment, a triumph that congealed his sense of belonging to Israel by being able to communicate virtually on Grindr in Hebrew. Interactions on Grindr between newcomers such as Sagi and locals can sometimes facilitate belonging.

Grindr serves as a way for immigrants to make friends somewhere new, supporting previous studies of immigrants on Grindr (Shield, 2017, p. 244). Sagi mentions that "at the beginning" of his move to Israel, on Grindr he would declare "I moved here so I'm also looking for friends" (in addition to sex and relationships) and as a result he "met a couple of . . . good friends through Grindr." Findings from this study reinforce scholarship on how communicating via Grindr and similar technologies can "figure in processes of migrant adaptation" (Boston, 2015; in Shield, 2017, p. 246). Not only is this friendship beneficial to new immigrants but also to tourists. Shane, on his second visit to the country, spent time with people he had met via Grindr during his initial trip. These friendships extend beyond the cases of immigration and tourism, as many local participants mention the friends they have obtained as a result of using Grindr, supporting research on Grindr's use for friendship-building (Byron, 2020). A relational result of the tourist-local exchange on Grindr can be long-term friendships, and these friendships are strategically beneficial for migration and tourism goals.

Some potential immigrants on Grindr express relational desires with locals openly, as a strategy to "open the door" for migration opportunities. Shane jokes on Grindr that he "is looking for an Israeli husband." Based on the rest of the interview, Shane's joking about an Israeli husband stems from a genuine desire for an Israeli relationship partner—he claims to "really" desire this, and reflects thoughtfully on the practicalities of navigating citizenship issues. He expresses admiration for Israeli men and was interviewed on his

second visit to the country. Although Shane is a tourist, he holds the potential of immigration in his mind. Shane's perspective is one that other immigrants remembered sharing when they thought back to the first stages of their choices to immigrate. Sagi recalls his experiences of traveling to Israel before immigrating there:

> When you are the tourist [and] even when I came to Israel as a tourist, you want to hook up with locals and maybe have them spend . . . time with you. I always had this secret hope that I that I might meet somebody who might turn into something serious, because I always wanted to come live there.

As a tourist, Sagi's relational imaginings temporally extend beyond the hookup to "spending time" together. His relational imaginings stem from his "secret hope" that he would meet someone and have a long-term relational future with them, facilitating a move to Israel. Sagi and many other Jewish tourists like him are motivated, in part, by the aspiration to migrate to Israel (Kelner, 2012, pp. 33, 146). Such fantasies underpin some tourist interactions with locals on Grindr, and relational desires mingle with migration goals. For Jewish tourists in the study who were considering immigrating, their desire to move to Israel was tied to their intersecting ethnoreligious and sexual identities and experiences of diaspora (also supported in Kelner, 2012). As 23-year-old tourist Jake explains, it is rare to encounter the "double minority" of a gay Jew to marry in countries outside of Israel where Jewish people are already a minority. Some non-Israeli potential immigrants imagine that marrying an Israeli is an ideal solution to their migration aspirations.

The relations formed independently through Grindr supplement those immigrants form with institutions aimed at facilitating immigration. Immigrants use Grindr to help them adapt to the spaces they have moved to. Grindr becomes a digital space where immigrants can work through problems that affect their assimilation in in-person public spaces, such as language acquisition or a lack of social network, by connecting with others through small, low-stakes interactions that have the potential to form relational trajectories of romantic partners, professional connections, friends, and sexual partners. The communication of identities on Grindr means that for those whose immigration motives are tied to particular identities, such as being Jewish, being able to determine the national, religious, and ethnic statuses of potential partners is especially helpful. The knowledge gained through Grindr tourism practices bears on migration practices and acclimation; thus, as tourism practices are individualized through Grindr, migration practices may also be shifting to more individualized, app-oriented ones. Further research should investigate this.

Locals' Solidifying of Multicultural, Cosmopolitan Selves

As mentioned above, locals are eager to meet tourists on Grindr. Ariel, a 32-year-old local, points out that many Tel Avivians have Grindr profiles "in English because they want to explore the tourists." Furthermore, locals benefit from Grindr's interactions with tourists because doing so builds on their sense of cosmopolitan belonging to Tel Aviv. Locals engage in Grindr tourism to foster their sense of themselves as multicultural and to experience vicarious travel outside of their current environment. This is done through Grindr tourism practices of having profiles intentionally in English as a lingua franca, hosting informal one-on-one tours, and seeking out international travelers on Grindr.

Locals discuss benefiting from becoming friends with and interacting with tourists on Grindr. However, like in the case of the tourists' perspective of Grindr tourism benefits, the advantages of connections with tourists do not necessarily require meeting in person. Jamie, a 34-year-old local who emigrated from Southern Europe, spends a lot of time on Grindr. Although he frequently meets people from Grindr in person, he also spends a lot of time "relaxing" by chatting on the app with people he does not intend to meet with. In his audio diary, Jamie reports on how he likes to open Grindr in his neighborhood "on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, next to the airport." When he opens the app, he "always see[s] tourists and . . . jump[s] to them" because he is eager to talk to them, despite "know[ing]" he's "not going to meet anyone" because they are usually in the airport departing. He "just talk[s] to them." Jamie likes tourists because, in his words, he is "multicultural." He has not only had experiences of living in different countries but also his career involves cultural comparison. He appreciates opportunities to practice speaking the multiple languages he knows with the tourists he encounters on Grindr. In a quiet Tel Aviv suburb, he can talk to a world of people just by being physically close to the airport due to Grindr's geolocation features. The busy airport overlaps with the static space of Jamie's home, when viewed through Grindr. Using Grindr and having access to the people coming in and out of Israel grants Jamie different experiences in the same location. Locals have the potential to navigate out of the "stuckness" of their physical spaces through Grindr.

Locals and tourists also arrange to meet up in person for informal neighborhood tours, often referred to colloquially as "showing around." The personal tours given by locals take place in person, but they are arranged by way of Grindr. They are done independently outside of any travel institutions and outside of any "official" tour guide capacity. Shane describes appreciating the many welcoming messages locals send him on Grindr, saying things like "oh, you're new, let me show you around, let's meet up." Some local participants engaged with the touring practice, including Avi, a 31-year-old local. He shares that he "really like[s] to meet travelers." However, he stresses that he is not having "sex with them most of the time." The tour is not necessarily a seduction technique. Rather, he genuinely "like[s] to go with them around . . . Tel Aviv and to talk," particularly about "the LGBT + rights in . . . [the tourist's] country, . . . religious issues," and what the tourist thinks

"about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict." Avi's description of his tours up to now appears typical and reflective of experiences of some tourists, such as Shane. However, Avi also shares that, unusually, he keeps "a diary with the things they tell [him] about themselves" and their home countries.

Such an intimate, revelatory detail of Avi's diary indicates the significance of interactions through Grindr for people like him. Through Grindr, locals meet others from abroad and have conversations about international political and social issues. Avi expresses curiosity about LGBT + politics elsewhere and enjoys comparing different countries and experiences. Avi illustrates a popular desire among locals to share discussions around the political situation with tourists, who are often uncomfortable asking about it because of taboos in their own country about political correctness. For example, Avi later mentions Germans being shy in particular, alluding to the history of the Holocaust and perceived sensitivity around Jewishness. Israel has its own norms of the appropriateness of political talk, with it being arguably more socially acceptable and common to do so compared to other Global Northern contexts such as the United States or United Kingdom (Mor et al., 2015, pp. 7–8). Avi's expressed interest in having tourist–local dialogues about politics shows how Grindr enables opportunities for locals to exhibit and socially benefit from—by getting attention from tourists—their own intellectual resources, in that they possess tacit local political knowledge in relation to the "ignorant" tourist. Locals also find it flattering to be the source of knowledge for tourists. Thus within their interactions with each other enabled by Grindr, tourists and locals are able to enter into discussions of political issues, religion, and cultural norms.

Tourism, often understood as a temporary social experience, actually lingers and permeates everyday lives and relations of locals and contributes to their cosmopolitan identities. Jamie and Avi's stories show that for locals, interaction with tourists on Grindr leads to the acquisition of knowledge about other locations and the issues within them. The attainment of relations with tourists reinforces some locals' perceptions of being "multicultural" people who enjoy intellectual and political discussions. Associations with multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism are tied to urban environments such as Tel Aviv (Moussawi, 2013); this particular practice of Grindr tourism may also occur in other cities. Tourism practices—and Grindr practices—are being reshaped as Grindr users adopt dating app technologies to instantly, and directly engage with locals and tourists outside of conventional institutions like travel groups and tourism agencies. In the case of this research context, many locals themselves contribute to these changes. Practices of Grindr tourism expressed by tourists and locals show how knowledge and social resources potentially flow between the tourists and locals, adding nuance to discussion about relations of unidirectional exploitation of locals by tourists highlighted in sex tourism research (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016, p. 412).

Grindr tourism practices indicate that Grindr is a key part of people's independent experiences of tourism and has social ramifications for tourists, immigrants, and locals. Grindr is enabling both tourism practices and quotidian interactions with others. Grindr tourism allows further social resources to be obtained, as seen in the instances of learning Hebrew on Grindr and making friends when moving to the city. It allows locals to move beyond the constraints of their physical space and national boundaries by providing opportunities to indirectly experience other spaces via social interactions with tourists. Moreover, this embedded learning and experiencing of other places covers deep and sometimes taboo or controversial topics, such as LGBT + rights and homophobic violence in other countries, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the trauma of the Holocaust, and difficulties of experiencing minority sexual identities, especially those that intersect with a Jewish ethnoreligious identity.

Conclusion: Grindr Tourism Practices' Impacts on Tourist–Local Relations, the Tourism Industry, and Technological Convergence

Grindr tourism reveals how contemporary intimacies can be formed independently and privately through the virtual co-congregation of different social groups, including nationalities and ethnicities, in digital spaces. This descriptive, exploratory study of Grindr tourism practices indicates a social and technological shift away from "conventional" travel institutions such as professional group tours to more independent, mobile, digitally mediated travel experiences whereby tourists and locals can communicate more directly via Grindr. Grindr tourism practices reveal a process of technological convergence occurring among dating app technologies. I will now expand on these concluding points by addressing the ramifications of findings on Grindr tourism practices for tourist–local social relations, the gay tourism industry, and convergence.

Grindr's Impacts on Tourists, Immigrants, and Locals

As has been established in this article, the practices of Grindr tourism alert us to the transformative extension of dating apps' interactional potential for tourism purposes. Grindr tourism practices highlight how people use dating app technologies in their everyday lives for reasons such as travel and learning "from the ground up" via interactions with locals on Grindr; this article offers a theoretical contribution through the concept of embedded learning to describe contemporary media-integrated tourism. Grindr tourism is a way to experience one's presence in the physical location more deeply. Thus, Grindr practices are part of the everyday creation and habitation of situated virtual and physical spaces. Digital media have

shaped forms of "environmental knowing" (Dourish, 2006, p. 304), or everyday understandings of the world around them through digitally mediated "encounters with everyday space." This research indicates that Grindr serves the social purpose of "environmental knowing" for users situated in physical destinations characterized by tourism. Both tourists and locals who choose to engage in Grindr tourism interactional exchanges claim to benefit from it. For tourists, Grindr enables forms of environmental knowledge by creating an educational pathway for locals who inhabit and create the spaces of Tel Aviv. From their interactions with tourists, locals gain the ability to cut through physical spatial boundaries and come to know other spaces vicariously through social interactions, whether only virtual or also in-person. Yet it must be noted that this conclusion can only be made about locals who choose to engage with tourists on Grindr. Not all do, and some, like Jamie, prefer to only engage virtually via chat. What is striking is that the engagement between tourists and locals on Grindr does not need to result in in-person interactions to still be practices of Grindr tourism; there are benefits even of interactions that happen only virtually. Grindr tourism makes the physical space of Tel Aviv more legible to tourists and immigrants as a result of the spatiality of Grindr.

The study findings are applicable to other contexts and sites. Examining the case of Tel Aviv highlights the importance of Grindr tourism for particular intersecting minority identities. In this study, the overlap of Jewish, gay, and migration identities impacted the kinds of interactions sought after through Grindr and the potential relational trajectories that could form from communication on the app. It also demonstrated how the challenges of being Jewish and gay in some parts of the world motivated the kinds of intimacies and relations formed with others, as well as how identities affect comfort levels in digital and physical spaces (such as in the case of Raphael). Similar challenges around other overlapping minority identities may be navigated through Grindr in other parts of the world. Grindr tourism could enable knowledge acquisition and meaningful connections for locals located in homophobic environments without access to other locals who are gay. Other findings from the study are potentially generalizable, such as how cosmopolitan, multicultural identities are reified through Grindr interactions with outsiders, as well as Grindr's potential for knowledge-building and networking. Although findings from the case of Tel Aviv may be applicable to other tourism settings, future research should compare contexts of Grindr tourism to see if it affects locals in other countries differently.

Dating Apps' Re-embedding of Tourism Practices

Tourism practices now take place in digital spaces infused with potential intimacies between strangers. By facilitating individualized, independent practices of tourism that are arranged by and occur between two people, Grindr illustrates how traditional GTI tourism institutions created to cater for sexuality-based travel have been disrupted. Vorobjovas-Pinta and Hardy (2016) argue that the (gay) spaces in which interactions take place between gay tourists and gay locals is increasingly moving away from the physical—in the case of tourism, tied to physical "gay destination" locations, spaces, and institutions—to the digital, such as spaces like Grindr (p. 413). Further in this vein, Grindr tourism practices differ from those that characterized the traditional GTI. Unlike the sexuality-based travel motivations emphasized by the GTI, research indicates contemporary gay tourists travel for wide-ranging reasons (Blichfeldt et al., 2011; Hughes & Deutsch, 2010; Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016), findings which were upheld in this study. At moments when people are interested in engaging with LGBT + spaces or people, they use an app to do so when they want to, instead of basing an entire vacation around this interest, as had been done in the past (Hughes & Deutsch, 2010; Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016, p. 414). In the present study, it was clear that neither tourists nor locals took much interest in "traditional" local physical spaces; most directly stated in their interviews that they had little to no engagement with physical gay community spaces such as community centers or gay bars. For most participants, regardless of whether local, immigrant, or tourist, the primary way they engaged with gay spaces was through Grindr and through their personal, individual friendship networks. Therefore, it is fair to say that Grindr aids in the manifestation of individualized travel experiences, in comparison to traditional GTI institutions, through its creation of a space in which tourism practices take place despite its wider reputation as a dating/hookup app. Grindr allows users to engage in gay spaces in tourist destinations with new immediacy, as and when they want to, furthering independent travel experiences that overlap with other domains of social life. Local Grindr users can choose to ignore tourists or seek them out, potentially granting agency on behalf of locals as to how much of their local space (physical or virtual) is shared with tourists co-present on Grindr. Thus, convenience, temporality, and agency drive engagement in virtual LGBT + dating app spaces, including as part of tourism. Tourism is changing, and the reduction of tourism during the pandemic presents an opportunity for urban travel destinations to adapt their municipal strategies to reflect changing tourism norms. They may wish to consider having representatives on Grindr or reframing offerings to capture the "off the beaten track" experiences pursued by tourists. To tourists who happen to be gay, Grindr presents an alternative to the Gay Tourism Industry by providing an expanded vision of tourism that exists outside the commercial centers and institutions of the Gay Tourism Industry; such establishments must adapt to keep up.

Impacts for Convergence and the Role of Dating Apps in Social Life

Beyond the tourism industry, this study has broader relevance for other personal digital technologies. Considering Grindr as a site of convergence of different social purposes

and relational trajectories reflects participant narratives of Grindr's multipronged influences in their lives: as a way to find a hookup, meet a boyfriend, learn a language, or experience a location more fully by talking to locals while traveling. The advent of Grindr has brought about Grindr tourism practices such as new avenues for tourists and locals to easily interact on the app, as well as a route to connection offline through relations that can also involve sexual intimacy, or not. The "technological appropriation" (Duguay, 2019, p. 31) of Grindr for tourism purposes, and Grindr's embracing of this through the change in "infrastructure" (Duguay, 2019, p. 30) by way of the Grindr 2018 Explore feature whereby users can change their profile geolocation and look at local profiles abroad in advance of their trip—are potentially indicative of a wider trend of convergence among dating apps. By illustrating how dating apps are part of an ongoing process of technological change, the issue of convergence comes to the fore. Many dating apps are shifting their models from isolated networks of uses with anonymous customized profiles to ones based on convergence, which can be defined as the tendency for different technologies to converge together and unify as they advance. The geolocation and expansion of purpose features of Grindr exemplify particular convergences. Most popular dating app algorithms rely on geolocation software to present potential matches. However, they have now added features to alter one's geolocation in anticipation of upcoming travel, such as Grindr tourism, Grindr Explore, and Tinder Passport features. Although geolocation forms the core of location-based dating apps that are typical of the current period, flexibility in geolocation enables further uptake of the tourism and travel affordances of dating apps. Dating apps have expanded their purposes to offerings beyond dating. Bumble offers not only dating but also a "networking" mode of the app to match people in business. Grindr embodies a convergence of a tourism device and a dating app. Since 2009, Grindr has become a combination of a tourism book, health organizer, friendship network, dating app, hookup app, and language-learning device.

In sum, this research shows how apps can have far-reaching implications for human relationships formed in the context of international travel, and furthermore, how dating apps are utilized as spaces for cross-cultural exchange and relationship-building based on migration identities. It highlights a trend that has grown initially simply out of pursuing sexual and romantic connections that now has ramifications that reach across cultural boundaries and geographical regions. A detailed examination of Grindr tourism practices offers insight into how dating app technologies extend possibilities for new relations and intimacies that can affect travel and international understanding as well as everyday social lives.

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