Risk and transgression on holiday: ‘New experiences’ and the pied piper of excessive consumption

Daniel Briggs and Sébastien Tutenges

Dr Daniel Briggs

Professor of Criminology

Universidad Europea

C/ Tajo s/n,

Villaviciosa de Odón,

Madrid 28670

Spain

Biography

Daniel is a researcher, writer and inter-disciplinary academic who studies social problems. For nearly fifteen years, he has undertaken a significant amount of funded mixed-methods and ethnographic research into various social issues from street drug users to terminally ill-patients; from illegal immigrants to football hooligans; and from gypsies to gangs and deviant youth behaviours. He has published over 50 book chapters and articles and is the author of Crack cocaine users: High society and low life in south London (Routledge) and Deviance and risk on holiday: An ethnography with British tourists in Ibiza (Palgrave MacMillan). He now teaches and researches in Madrid, Spain.

Dr Sébastien Tutenges

Assistant Professor

Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research,
Biography

Sébastien Tutenges is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research at Aarhus University in Denmark. His research is broadly concerned with the use of alcohol and drugs among contemporary youth. In particular, he is interested in how young people experience, understand, and make meaning of their own substance use. His work is strongly influenced by phenomenology, existentialism, micro-sociology, and ethnographic methodology. These interests have resulted in a decade of studying young people in a variety of nightlife environments, including bars, pubs, nightclubs, strip clubs, music festivals, rave parties, and seaside resorts such as Ibiza in Spain and Sunny Beach in Bulgaria. Dr. Tutenges has published a wide range of book chapters and articles, including in Addiction, Alcohol & Alcoholism, American Journal on Addiction, BMC Public Health, European Addiction Research, International Journal of Drug Policy, Leisure Studies, Tourism Management, Tourist Studies, and Journal of Youth Studies.
Abstract

When British youth holiday abroad, they tend to engage in increased consumption of alcohol, drugs, violence and unprotected sex – collectively known as ‘risk’ behaviours. While numerous epidemiological studies have documented the extent of these risk behaviours in places like the Balearic islands, few have taken a phenomenological approach with the participants who go there – to find out how they experience and attribute meaning to their transgression on holiday. Our research reports on this matter and is based on ethnographic data collected in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively. We argue that individual and group holiday ambitions for a ‘blow out’ are actively complemented by aggressive commercial forces which seek to capitalise on consumer spending, thus assisting in the production of risk. We show how this works by reporting from the resort of San Antonio, Ibiza.

Word count: 9,569 excluding references

Keywords: Risk, deviance, holiday, youth, young people, commercial.
Introduction

As we walk along the beach on Tuesday afternoon, we get talking with a group of young men from Kent. During the focus group and subsequent afternoon, they manage to drink around twelve pints of beer each. At home they drink just twice weekly, but here in Ibiza they drink almost non-stop. They confess to being cautious at home about how much they drink and where they take drugs because of their ‘local image’. However, sometimes it does get out of control they say. They regularly get into fights in their home town on weekends but not with each other; only with “randoms who are out to cause problems”. Only one of the nine in the group has a girlfriend. He says he is “true to her” but the rest laugh when they recount how they all paid for sex in a brothel the night before last. They have been away in a group to various holiday destinations in Europe. In one city, one of the group hospitalised another in the same party by battering him with a beer bottle. In another destination, they say they took 250 pills between the four of them in a weekend. Mostly they are attracted to these destinations for the dance music although some in the group prefer getting ‘gatted’ (drunk). They arrived on their holiday in Ibiza drunk and high on pills, and with only one hour sleep after arrival, went drinking in bars and then clubbing. A typical day and night sees them get up at around midday, swim, eat breakfast, drink beer throughout the afternoon, swim, move on to cocktails and shots in the evening and taking various drugs. [Field notes – Daniel Briggs]

These kinds of events are not unusual for British youth when they holiday abroad at nightlife destinations such Ibiza in Spain (Bellis et al., 2000; Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2009). In 2010, one of us led an ethnographic pilot study into the binge drinking attitudes of British youth in Ibiza (Briggs et al., 2011a). We did this because there seemed to be a lack of ethnographic material on British youth abroad and their drinking practices. We spent one week with British youth in San Antonio, Ibiza and undertook focus groups and observations in bars, clubs and
general touristic locations. In 2011, when we returned, we found that binge drinking needed to be placed within a larger context of the changes in late modernity and the night-time economy and how commercial forces were pied-pipering many of these young people into dangerous forms of excessive consumption.

This article reports on these issues, focusing in particular on practices of excessive consumption and transgression (Bataille, 1967) in the context of British youth abroad. Our data indicates that ‘the holiday’ offers British youth new opportunities for excess and transgression as they detach themselves from home identities and responsibilities, and construct themselves as ‘free from all restraint’. This sense of freedom is fuelled by commercial forces that promote and capitalise on an ‘anything goes’ ethos (Hobbs et al. 2005). A central concept in the British research on alcohol and drugs is that of the ‘night-time economy’ (NTE), which may be defined as “all aspects of the leisure, retail and alcohol industries and related aspects of city economies. Entertainment areas comprise an important part of the NTE” (Graham and Homel 2008: 16). Recent decades have seen a rapid growth in the NTE across the world, which is part of the reason that binge drinking has become so common among youth in Britain and many other countries (Hayward and Hobbs 2007). On the party island of Ibiza, the NTE operates 24/7 and leaves little room for boredom and afterthought. Here tourists are offered non-stop fun focused on the consumption of alcohol, drugs, sex and music; a lifestyle that many British tourists are already familiar from back home.

Our article is framed around ethnographic field notes and verbatim quotes because we want to bring readers close to the ‘Ibiza experience’ through detailed descriptions of significant empirical situations (Jackson, 1996; Tutenges 2010: 48-50). We firstly frame this against excessive consumption and the NTE and how this often sets the foundation for holiday transgression. We then move on to discuss youth, risk and the holiday and then contextualise our field location. Our findings present patterns of excessive consumption and deviance in Ibiza after dark before discussing how it
occurs in the daytime. As we shall see the necessity to spend is not restricted to the night, but also operates in the daytime; albeit in a less intensive manner.

Excessive consumption and the NTE

Young British people don’t just go abroad and ‘go crazy’. Our data shows that they are very much engaging in behaviours, albeit exaggerated versions, which they have come to learn from going out at home; they therefore display a commitment to excessive consumption within the context of increased leisure time and the development of the NTE as a site which permits excess and transgression (Uriely and Belhassen 2006). However, these changes need to be situated within the transition from modernity to late-modernity which has witnessed massive social changes across the social structure partly produced by the economic transition from ‘Fordist’ to ‘post-Fordist’ economies (Amin, 1994). It is argued that this shift lead to the re-invention of major western cities as sites to facilitate the engagement in a culture of leisure and excessive consumption (Hannigan, 1998; Hayward, 2004; Jayne, 2006; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007). As Miles (2010) notes, place is now packaged to appeal to as many consumers as possible. This has been supported by a shift towards a more leisure-orientated NTE (Lash and Urry, 1994; Scott, 2000) centred on the construction of identities and lifestyles. This has lead to increased social, cultural and spatial segregation (Bell and Jayne, 2004) as well as the exclusion of working class and lower-income populations in some of those areas (Measham and Hadfield, 2009).

Although centred on ‘packaged fun’, these NTEs are characterised by a high incidence of crime and disorder (Bromley and Nelson, 2002; Hobbs et al., 2005), thus burdening the operation of public agencies (Roberts, 2006). Commentators relate this to other important changes in youth culture in Britain over the past two decades which point to the emergence of a ‘new culture of intoxication’ (Measham and Brain, 2005) including weekend poly-drug use (the combining of various psychoactive substances in one session) and ‘binge drinking’ (Moore and Measham, 2008; Measham and Moore, 2009). Therefore, certain forms of crime and anti-social behaviour are associated with dynamics intrinsic to the burgeoning NTE, as well as changes in the culture of intoxication among
British youth. It is within these social spheres that youth risk taking has become more pervasive (Hayward, 2004).

**Youth, risk and the holiday**

For many British youth, risk is significantly appealing (Hayward, 2002; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007) and another social arena which seems to provide a playground for these risk behaviours is the holiday (Hughes et al., 2009). As we noted earlier, there have been numerous epidemiological studies on youth, risk and the holiday (e.g. Bellis et al., 2000; Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2009). However, by comparison, there are few qualitative studies (but see, for example, Uriely and Belhassen 2006; Tutenges, 2010; Briggs 2013). Some British ethnographic studies focus on the role of gender spaces on holiday (Andrews, 2008; Thurnell-Read 2012) as they do on ex-patriots and their relationship with tourists (O’Reilly, 2000).

It is well documented that British youth engage in increased alcohol, drug use, and (unprotected) sex during their ‘holidays’ at nightlife destinations (Bellis et al., 2003; Engineer et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2009). For example, research on British youth on holiday in the Balearics found that the number of British in their sample (n=1033) drinking five days a week or more jumped from 7% in the UK to 86% when they were in Ibiza. Furthermore, they found that over half (53.9%) of British youth to Ibiza reported using at least one drug on holiday and over a third reported using more than one drug (Hughes et al., 2009).

Among British youth, Spain is a popular overseas holiday destination (Govern de les Illes de Balears, 2008); particularly the Balearic Island of Ibiza. Research points to the popularity of its club music (IREFREA, 2007), ‘crazy’ party scene and easy access to substances (Bellis et al., 2003; Calafat et al., 1998; Hughes et al., 2004). Indeed, these features of Ibiza seem to be specifically marketed at British youth (Sellars, 1998) which is why Ibiza relies so much on young British tourists to support its economy (Armstrong, 2004; Garratt, 1999). British youth can also take advantage of cheap international airfares and package holidays which sustains the continued popularity of the island.
(Hughes et al., 2009). However, statistics show the number of British tourists visiting Ibiza have significantly dropped over the last decade: from 700,000 in 1999 (Fomento del Turismo de Ibiza, 1999) to 570,000 in 2007 (IREFREA, 2007). Indeed, researchers from the University of the Balearics show that there is new competition with ‘new cheap beach destinations’ and the local government seem to be moving towards the promotion of other areas of tourism such as cycling and golf - perhaps in the hope of altering the image of Ibiza as a place of drugs, alcohol and general transgression (Payeras et al., 2011).

**Phenomenology, consumer excess and transgression**

A host of social theorists have analysed the role of consumer culture and the burgeoning NTE in facilitating and promoting consumer excess and transgression (Baudrillard, 1998; Bauman, 1998; Featherstone, 1994; Hayward, 2004; Hobbs et al. 2005). As Hayward and Hobbs (2007: 443) note the ‘liminalisation of space within the NTE should not be understood as ‘spontaneous manifestations of the carnivalesque’, primarily because of the extent of the influence of big business in structuring the desires and attitudes of young drinkers as well as the environment in which they are realised’. It is this context that weekends have become a popular bracket whereby these forms of consumption take place while, at the same time, acting as a temporal departure from routine and repression. They are, as Blackshaw (2003) argues, the occasion for ritualised types of leisure practice that celebrate excess, physicality and the suspension of responsibility which is why leisure ritually licences forms of transgression such as drunkenness, taking drugs and violence.

This was said to have occurred as a result of a rise in disposable leisure time, fuelling the ‘club culture’ in the 1980s which dissolved fixed structural divisions such as class, race and gender as the dancefloor crowd became collectively immersed (Redhead, 1993). Rave and dance music was said to represent the demise of subcultural oppositional youth styles of 1960s and 1970s. As Redhead (1990: 2) put it the subcultural struggle was redundant because young people and the rave experience was ‘more resonant of shopping and consumption rather than resistance and deviance’.
And although there have been recent efforts to suggest that clubs represent spaces for universal expression of ‘togetherness’, relaxation and pleasure, we have seen an increasing fragmentation and fluidity of culture which renders the concept of subculture problematic (Maffesoli, 1996; Malbon, 1999; Bennett, 1999). As Chaney (2004: 47) notes ‘the once accepted distinction between ‘sub’ and ‘dominant’ culture can no longer be said to hold true in a world where the so-called dominant culture has fragmented into a plurality of lifestyle sensibilities and preferences’. Instead terms like ‘lifestyle’ and ‘neotribes’ have been favoured over ‘subculture’ because of their focus on consumer creativity and flexibility; that is how young people construct and reconstruct their image and identity through ongoing shifts in musical and stylistic taste (Maffesoli 1996; Miles 2010).

In this article we want to supplement these theoretical discussions by carefully describing the practice and experience of excessive consumption and transgression in the context of British youth in Ibiza. Here we give priority to description over explanation, to the concrete over the abstract, because we want to bring readers close to the lived reality of risky consumption among British youth abroad. In doing so, we follow the path of the phenomenologist Michael D. Jackson (1996) who warns against the “arcane, abstract, and alienating character of much theoretical thought” (1996: 2). He explains that the writing of detailed descriptions of ‘lived reality’ can be used as a strategy to avoid the “estranging effects of conceptual models and systematic explanation which, when pushed too far, disqualify and efface the very life one wants to understand” (Jackson 1996: 2). This is not to suggest that the theoretical literature on consumer culture and the NTE is mistaken or superfluous! Rather it is to suggest that social theorizing should go hand in hand with detailed descriptions of social reality. We now turn to the aims and methods of the study before presenting the findings.¹

¹ This paper does not permit a full discussion of gender relations but we have discussed the concept elsewhere (Briggs, 2013).
Methods

This data is based on three short studies which used a mixture of ethnographic and phenomenological methods (Hammersley, 1992; Jackson, 1996) with British youth abroad in Ibiza, Spain in July 2009, July 2010 and June 2011. We were seeking to explore the cultural attitudes and beliefs of these groups of young people while, at the same time, understand the way in which they ‘subjectively experience’ the holiday. For these reasons our approach blends a mix of ethnography and phenomenology. The approach evolved organically while in the field as we came to realise many of the young people travelled in large groups but also had quite individual as well as collective subjective intentions for their holiday.

In all three projects, focus groups and observations were conducted in bars, clubs, beaches, and general touristic areas. These areas were public and activity was observed which would have happened without intervention or influence from researchers. We were not interested in ‘living the life’ as it were (Inciardi, 1995) but rather to make astute observations of British youth and their behaviours. We used a combination of overt and covert roles (Adler, 1985; Agar, 1986; Bourgois, 1995) and tried, where possible, to record low inference descriptors (field notes). Researchers’ thoughts and impressions accompanied these notes, as well as summaries of conversations. This information was noted within a few hours of concluding observation sessions and these data were entered directly into a password-secured laptop.

A preliminary scoping exercise was undertaken by one of the authors in July 2009 and visits were made to various tourist destinations on the island. Before travelling out in the summer of 2010, we undertook six pilot focus groups with existing contacts to determine an appropriate interview schedule and generate some themes. In 2010, seventeen focus groups were undertaken in Ibiza (n=97, aged between 17 and 31) over one week and in 2011 fifteen\(^2\) were conducted (n=72, aged

\(^2\) We base this number on data collected by Daniel Briggs and Sébastien Tutenges.
between 18 and 35) over one week respectively. They composed of 90 young men and 79 young women of predominantly white working class background. The focus groups were open-ended which enabled researchers to determine how British youth interpreted and talked about their behaviours (Carlson et al., 1994; Clapp et al., 2007; Griffin et al., 2009). They were digitally recorded, with signed/verbal consent. Purposive and snowball sampling strategy was used to recruit groups into the study. Focus group numbers tended to be between three and 12 participants, often reflecting the group dynamics of holiday friendships. Researchers made observations separate to the focus groups but made notes of particular aspects of what was taking place in the group setting shortly after the interview (hence the use of parenthesis which offers more description). In a few cases, we were fortunate to undertake follow-up interviews though this very much depended on whether those same groups were willing to participate.

The youth groups tended to have a working class background and most, who were approached, agreed to participate in the research. However, some refused – it seems because either they had hangovers or felt guilty about what they were doing/had done. These groups tended to be older male groups (late 20s onwards). When we arrived on both occasions, we found we could not avoid collecting data while people were intoxicated in some form. Indeed, had we restricted data collection to non-drinking groups, we would have had a very small sample size and a skewed picture of substance use on holiday.

We acknowledge that informed consent and intoxication are important to consider when conducting such in-situ research. Some note the problems of undertaking such methods when people drinking heavily or on drugs may be overly compliant in agreeing to be interviewed (Measham et al. 2001). However, we took steps not to abuse such compliance, and where possible, tried to reaffirm consent a few days after the interview. If individuals or groups were too intoxicated, they were not approached or asked to participate in this research project. However, it was difficult to judge from the outset who may be potential groups; that is, it was at times difficult to know how
drunk some groups were when they did not display typical signs of drunkenness. In this way, and as others have done in the context of researching youth drinking cultures (Blackman, 2007; Briggs et al., 2011a; 2011b) we drank alcohol with participants to establish credibility, rapport and trust.

Of course there is no correct way to research these issues and our approach has benefits as it does drawbacks. For example, while on one hand, by drinking with young people, we walk into an ethical and methodological no-man’s land, however, on the other, we have to ask how much can people remember they drank or how many drugs they took when they complete a survey after a week of non-stop intoxication in Ibiza? There seems to be no perfect means of data collection without its downfalls. Initially, it was stated in the ethics proposal that drinking alcohol would take place to some extent facilitate relationships - otherwise we would have looked out of place; especially in a social arena where the general expectation is to drink or get drunk. However, in Ibiza we realised that when with groups it was beneficial to ‘keep up’ to some degree with their drinking pace, since they were engaged in group drinking.

All the people we approached for formal interviewing were aware of our research intentions. We did not encourage people to drink and/or take drugs. Our role was to play along with the dynamics to some extent rather than direct proceedings. This involved drinking but not to the extent of our participants as we missed out on some drinks or substituting water at other times. We needed to be able to record actions and conversations but also not totally release ourselves to the research context (see Briggs, 2013 for more detailed discussion). We took notes on BlackBerry phones and note pads through the night to capture these experiences and did follow-up interviews with some of the same groups to validate the order of their evenings. This bolstered the validity of the data.

Informal conversations were also undertaken with local businesses, bar owners, taxi drivers, prostitutes, PR workers and tourist representatives about their perceptions and experiences of British youth abroad. Informal conversations were mentally noted and written up into observation
notes. All participants were given pseudonyms. Once transcribed, interview and observation data was categorised thematically, with the key areas of investigation providing the overall framework for coding (Ritchie and Spencer, 2004). Analyses were inductive, which meant that themes emerged from the data rather than being hypothesised. The research was granted ethics approval by the University of East London’s Ethics Committee.

Findings

*Attitudes to excessive consumption: Stepping up to Ibiza*

Many in our cohort come to Ibiza for the music, drugs and alcohol, to relax and get away from pressing life responsibilities and routines and/or to spend time with friends. They are, in the main, already familiar with what is expected of them on most weekends in the UK: excessive consumption and general transgression (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007). Most travel in large, single-sex groups from as few as three to as many as 20. Some within these groups don’t know each other, but only do so through ‘mate of a mate’ who is ‘going Ibiza’, networking through online social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Most see Ibiza as the most socially renowned place to go abroad, regardless of their holiday agenda. For some, the mere reputation of the island as a holiday destination was enough to secure their visit. For others, the motives are not really connected to anything else other than to ‘get fucked up’, ‘get messy’ or ‘wasted’:

*Dan:* How you calculate what is a best night out – how fucked you get, how many people you go home with?

*Aaron:* Yeah both. How fucked I get and who I end up with at the end of the night. That is what I base it on.

*Dan:* How do you feel about that? [to Charlie]

*Charlie:* Well I just think the more money you spend, the better it is.

---

3 For a more detailed discussion of data analysis see Briggs et al. (2011b).
Jerreld: Before I went out, I had 14 pints during the day.

Dan: What you have on top of that?

Jerreld: Don’t know because we just stopped off bar by bar.

Dan: You can’t even tell me how much you drank.

Jerreld: No way bruv.

Some seem to frown on other destinations – such as Magaluf and Aiya Napa – because they associate them with younger, less sophisticated British youth. These destinations are seen as ‘cheap’. This is perhaps reflected in the large numbers of our cohort who occupy the mid 20s age bracket upwards. It seems that Ibiza is a destination for all. One can stay in the affordable accommodation, be all inclusive yet can swank it up in the most famous clubs in the world – one can be part of the elite:

Fred: Ibiza is the place where the wealthy go, the superclubs, Amnesia, Pasha, Privilege’ – bit of both. They would never bother going Malia [another popular holiday destination for British youth in Greece] or somewhere like that. That’s for really young people.

Dan: So it’s a bit of both worlds. Different ends of the social strata. And you’re somewhere in the middle?

Fred: Scraping through to the middle.

Douglas: We’re at the bottom but we’re trying to get up [laughs].

Dan: You want to look good and afford it.

Fred: Tried going to the gym but I gave up but people here do seem to care more about their appearance than in Malia. You see more ripped men [athletic bodies] and nice women on the night out.

Douglas: Like in Magaluf [in Majorca, Spain], people are out in their umbro shorts and vest. Here it is more classier.
Being part of this elite – or being seen to be part of this elite – requires them to have substantial amounts of money, which is often expended with a big hullabaloo to gain attention and recognition from peers (Bataille 1967; Mauss 1990). The holiday excesses should therefore not be misinterpreted as subcultural resistance, opposition or revolutionary inclinations. Rather the tourists indulge in wasteful expenditure and consumption because this provides them with prestige and a sense that they are free from restraints and living life to the full. Spendthrifts prove with their immoderation that they have the means to ‘throw around money’: their expenditures make them glorious (Bataille 1967). The spending is thus a necessary requisite to enjoy the ‘experience’ and ‘make the most of the moment.’ Two young men we interviewed had been in Ibiza for a month and spent €14,000 between them, one spending €500 in one night. These high-powered spending attitudes are not only confined to young British men. One young woman said she “wouldn’t get out of the room” if she came away with £300 for a week, adding she “wouldn’t enjoy herself” with that kind of money. Another small group of girls who are in Ibiza for two weeks have saved for four months and each brought £1000 spending money. However, in the two days, they had each spent around £300, spending €40-50 before their nights out began:

**GG1:** But we were pissed before we went out.

**GG2:** Yeah we had peach schnapps and vodka.

**GG1:** We had like peach schnapps and then vodka but we was like mixing them both and filling it with sprite.

**Dan:** That’s the warm up then.

Later on in the conversation, they seem content to spend it all on the holiday. Ibiza seems to conjure an image of ‘unlimited money’; one has to be here and do it properly and can only do so

---

4 Many in our sample have low-paid jobs, are unemployed and/or have arrived in Ibiza looking for work. What they spend on holiday is often disproportionate to what they earn and what they have.
with vast amounts of money. If they do not have ‘holiday capital’, they are only likely to learn of this social expectation once they arrive in Ibiza. For example, we interviewed three young men aged between 18-19 who said they “felt out of their depth”. They conceded that the £800 they had brought for one week had not been enough and two days before the end of their holiday, they had run out of money and ‘maxed out’ credit cards. One paid £300 one evening to get into the VIP lounge of Eden nightclub.

This cohort have no ambitions to see the island or take in the culture, because they say it is all there for them in San Antonio – and it is. The money goes on the consumption of increased alcohol and drug use, and, in some cases, sex. Aside from increased drug and alcohol use, many tourists have the attitude that they will take advantage of whatever is on offer to them. Some have constructed, either individually or socially with friends, a holiday tick list. This list seems to compose of things which ‘should’ be done on holiday and involve drunken/drugged up/sex events – both as individuals and in the group context. While some seem to have some idea they will do these things, others have little idea until the opportunity presents itself on holiday. Engaging in these behaviours gives them memorable, out-there experiences that they can share with selected friends back home, either through narratives, pictures or videos (Tutenges and Sandberg, 2013). The desire to bring home entertaining stories creates the impetus for increased substance use and deviant behaviours. These positive attitudes towards excessive consumption are fuelled by the NTE (Hannigan, 1998; Hayward, 2004; Jayne, 2006; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007) which, as we shall see in the following, operates both day and night.

*The NTE - after dark*

Many save substantial amounts of money for the occasion and feel that ‘more money’ will enhance the experience. Indeed, in many conversations and interviews, it was clear that British youth were quite used to these ‘lives of leisure’ in the NTE back home in the UK. However, these attitudes to consumption are intensified in the holiday context (Briggs et al., 2011a; 2011b). Not
least so because Ibiza, while perhaps being cheap to visit (flights and accommodation if one books early), is not cheap in other respects. Indeed, the NTE is strategically geared towards spending. For example, club entry can range between €40-80; one-way taxi rides €30; drinks in clubs from €10-30 – the cheapest being water for €10 – and this is just the legal economy. Indeed, taxis race around doing double the legal speed during the night because it is the money-making hour.

Young people spend large amounts of money on drugs, alcohol and sex when they holiday because it is expected of them on this social occasion, and also because they take pleasure in being ‘wasteful’ (Bataille, 1967). The pleasure of wasting has to be seen in relation to the everyday life of these young people which, to a large extent, is subjected to the demands of necessity: many of them have to get up early in the morning on weekdays in order to study, work or look for a job. Focus is very much on collecting, protecting or saving resources. This is different during holidays in Ibiza. During the holiday focus is on the consumption and destruction of resources, most notably money, time and health. This kind of wastefulness is, in many societies, a sign of wealth, good fortune and power (Bataille 1967:102). By purposively and conspicuously squandering their resources, humans can momentarily release themselves from the demands of necessity and send out the message that they are free from restraint and material concerns. However, many of the British tourists cannot afford the champagne lifestyle – but try to live it. Some book all inclusive and/or find deals on the West End drinking strip (‘drinking strip’ hereafter) before going clubbing to save money. Here, these young men try to do just this:

Douglas: *We started drinking at 11am in the hotel because we are all inclusive.*

Dan: *So roughly how many of them did you drink in the day before you went out?*

Douglas: *I had about 8 of these small beers, 7 Malibu and pineapples, 7 vodka and Fantas, a couple of vodka and orange…*

Dan: *This is before you went out.*
Douglas: Yeah. But this is over 12 hours.

Fred: You weren’t really drunk though when we went out.

Douglas: I was feeling it a little bit when we went out. We went to a bar and paid €6 each and got a pint of vodka and red bull and between us got two bottles of peach schnapps, some shots. So I had the pint of vodka and red bull and then about 8 shots from the two bottles.

Dan: Fucking hell.

Douglas: Yeah, because some people didn’t want to do it.

Dan: After the shots?

Douglas: Well that was it.

Dan: Not in the club?

Douglas: Too busy, too many people, too expensive.

When they get to the club, they are unable to show their spending power which seems to make them feel slightly inferior. Later on in the interview:

Douglas: But obviously you get people here who have got the money then you get people like us who haven't got the money but want to be here and they try and do it on the budget.

Fred: They wouldn’t be round here anyway, they would be in villas and just go direct to the superclubs.

Douglas: I wanted to be able to do it properly.

Dan: How do you do it properly?
Fred: In an ideal world, I would want to go to each of the clubs at least once and drink and not have to worry about how much it cost. I hate scrimping and scraping to get a couple of drinks.

However, most people in the cohort don’t have this capital and end up confining their ‘holiday’ experience to nights out on the local drinking strip with occasional visits to the big clubs. Even when they leave their hotels, PRs from bayside and roadside bars, barter with them for business. A few groups say it takes them ‘a few hours’ to walk 20 minutes to the drinking strip because they get ‘roped’ into other bars – places which were not intentionally planned for the ‘night out’. The drinking strip (See Figure 1), for most in this cohort, is the principle destination and is made up of one street with small alleys disappearing each side. It is loaded with drinking venues, strip clubs and take away outlets. From about 10pm until about 6am, PRs pepper the streets, jumping in front of group to group, vying for potential punters. Some PRs are quite forceful and aggressive for business:

Kerry: You just get pulled in everywhere.

Rochene: For €12, you get two shots, pint of cocktail, two spirits and mixers but it is normally cheap crappy booze. I find everything really expensive out here.

During the night, club PRs also work the streets trying to sell tickets to bar crawls and the big clubs or ‘pre parties’ as they are called. One party of young men with whom we spent eight hours drinking each bought €40 tickets for a bar crawl in which they paid for their drinks and got free entry to nightclubs Eden and Es Paradis. This didn’t bother them though because they were escorted around from bar to bar by semi-naked women working for the nightclubs. In this respect, the social context also endorses spending and simulates sex behaviours (Briggs et al., 2011b). For example, two of us went into lap dancing clubs where the emphasis seems to be geared toward the client drinking and paying for lap dances and/or extras:
We opt for The Thrill and the PR man, who we talked to no less than one minute previously, treats us like new clients. He proudly takes us down the stairs as we pass two scantily-dressed women smoking cigarettes on the outside. We walk down the steps and pay €10 and are given two tickets to redeem our drinks. The PR man looks excited for us and says we are going to “love it”. The barwomen on the left cleans an already spotless bar and the strippers sit, looking bored. Even though we enter, it does not seem to trigger any real excitement for business. I don’t say that because they should be excited because ‘business has entered’ but it feels so ordinary, and The Thrill does not feel ‘thrilling’ at all. The place looks like this (see Figure 2):

As we walk down, most look up. Sébastien and I take a seat on two stools (highlighted red). Before we have a chance to settle, we are immediately surrounded by women. There doesn’t seem to be anyone dancing in the pole area and even when they do, they quickly seem to hide the most private area - “the fannies” - as the PRs say. We receive our drinks and one woman, Mary, tells me she has a degree in Economics but cannot find work in her country. She has been working here for one day, or at least that’s what she tells me. I would say Mary is about mid 20s, bleach blond hair, blue eyes and extremely large, natural-looking breasts. She dresses in a teasing outfit which just about covers the private areas. I confess to my marriage and that I have come for a quiet drink. I feel she knows she will not get a lap dance out of me and the conversation takes a moral line. At the back of the club, I see semi-transparent curtains separating the area where those go who pay for lap dances. €30 will get me this private viewing if I want. When the women periodically come out, they dance erotically around the pole making sure that they bend over facing the audience. [Field notes - Daniel Briggs]

In another strip club, the girls receive no wage but are paid in commission for getting punters to buy champagne in €20, €40 or €120 denominations. If one is not drinking or does not
appear to be drunk, they don’t seem to hang around long. These strip clubs are strategically placed in and around the main drinking strip and, as the evening descends into further drunken/drug use, the number of PR workers outside double from two to four in some cases. The PR men concentrate on very drunk male groups and, at times, are quite physical with the way in which they offer their deals; shepherding men in for “all the pussy” they could want. In this conversation with a group of young men who have partners and families in the UK, deviance, spending excess and risk are evident. The group recollect their visit to a strip club on the drinking strip:

Dan: You went in a strip club?

Jay: Yeah, we all went in there.

C-Dawg: Fucking get in, mate.

Dan: What, last night?

All: Yeah.

C-Dawg: [Still dreaming slightly] She was tight…[holding a pretend girls bum in his hands].

Jay: We had to get rid of our money. SPEND it.

Dan: So you had lap dances.

Jay: Yeah, I had three [lapdances].

Dan: That’s quite a few.

Jay: How many did we have? I can’t remember!

Streetfighter: I was licking her arsehole and that.

In a similar vein, the street prostitutes, who seem to be quite vulnerable, socially excluded African women also play a similar role (Briggs et al., 2011a; 2011b). They are often quite direct in
how they approach men, and at times, grabbing their private parts. The young male tourists don’t see this as attractive, but as functional and entertaining – indeed, it seems it is something dirty, something which they can say ‘they did’ in Ibiza. A similar finding was evident in the context of drugs. In the clubs, a few of our interviewees suggested that the clubs permitted certain drug dealers to operate in the clubs as long as they ‘took a cut’. On the drinking strip, one can also ask the PR workers for drugs as they are well connected to the dealers in this landscape. Young people may even have their own dealing contacts to take advantage of. As the evening evolves on the drinking strip, the alcohol deals lower from €10 for two shots, two double mixers (predominantly red bull to keep the party going) and a jog of cocktail to €7 or even €6. Some PRs even indicate that strippers reduce their rates because they also want to earn as much money as possible. Time is running out to make money but it doesn’t stop there because similar pressures also exist in the daytime.

The NTE in broad daylight

Quite quickly most British youth get into routines of recovering during the day and partying throughout the night. Most awake with hangovers, feeling unmotivated to go anywhere; quite fortunately because most have no ambition to see the island or take in the culture - but this is part of the holiday experience and the resort holds all the glitz and leisure attractions they could want (Miles, 2010). Some miss breakfast and lunch, losing the free privileges they have on half board or all inclusive deals, instead buy breakfasts in cafes. The PRs even work the breakfast shifts, if not coaxing people in for a ‘fry up’, then telling them of their fantastic steaks which are like ‘Nandos back home’. Because this period is the recovery period, many British youth seek to ‘fill the gap’ and this is done by consuming – albeit alcohol, drugs, buying sunglasses, taking rides, making moments and experiences – or perhaps discussing events which have evolved over the previous holiday:

It is about midday; the sun is beating down and the clouds are distant. Some yachts sit moving gently side to side in the Bay marina and the occasional speedboat passes. Our male friends who we met yesterday in a focus group now drunkenly lurch over two quite young
girls by the hotel swimming pool. They all sip cocktails but one of the young chaps seems pretty drunk already. Pete shouts across at me: “you got what you need for your research yet, mate?” and it echoes round the hotel walls. Already empty cups litter the floor as everyone basks in as much sun as they can before they return to the UK where the climate is more temperamental. There is a stale smell of vomit coming over the pool area again while the coolly-dressed African men return to try and flog their sunglasses and CDs. Some also offer “pills, weed, coke”.

Our friends return to get beers at 12.20pm. Pete then lies down with his torso in the sun. There are some mysteriously-looking fresh cuts on his legs. The girls they talk to also retreat to get more beers. Over to the other side of the pool, another posse of young men drinking beers start their pool-jumping frolics. They then, despite the ‘no diving warning sign’ start to dive in; one even risking a dive backwards in the shallow end. They laugh loudly and cajole in the pool while other young women look on unimpressed.

Meanwhile at 12.28pm, our friends Pete et al. seem to be getting on well with these other young women. One of them ‘is so thirsty’, she says, she downs two beers and then dangles her feet in the pool. Cigarettes are then offered around. Pete starts to slur his words and, as he talks, he spills half his beer on his own knee but doesn’t seem to notice. Pete finally finishes his second beer while a few others join the growing group.

By quarter to one our friends now go for top-up beers and the rest are asked if they want a drink. Beers are brought over but at the same time a few disappear. Some other boys start to play ball in the pool. Their friends on the side who were playing the pool-jumping and diving games are mesmerised by the offer of designer sunglasses from the African men. Two make a purchase. A few minutes later, the muscle man in Pete’s group walks over and claims a few beers. The girls behind me laugh as they flick through pictures on their digital camera – they point at the screen in disbelief; surely at the ‘crazy’ night they had. While I was not looking, Pete has gone to claim another few beers at about 1pm. They then carelessly spray
each other with sun tan lotion. While Pete finishes another beer, he stands teetering on the edge of the pool. He tries to attract one of the girls in the pool but is unsuccessful. [Field notes – Daniel Briggs]

In this way, drinking opportunities, offers of drugs, sunglasses and all fashionable holiday commodities marry well with the young people filling the time gap until the next night out. Young people can also spend money on daytime activities such as bungee jumps which costs €30 per person for a bungee jump and €10 for the DVD which filmed the 30 seconds; five-minute rubber ring power boat rides for €10; or even booze cruises, which range from two-hour sunset excursions to all-day drinking voyages. These trips certainly aren’t a price consideration for most:

**Steve:** You pay for the cruise [€100] and you had to buy your drinks on top of that. €20 or 30, you buy your drinks. They may give you a couple of drinks but you have to pay for the food and then you have all the games on the deck.

**Dan:** Like what?

**Steve:** Chasing people round the boat, getting in sexual positions.

A few groups we spoke to bought tickets for booze cruises ‘in advance’ to save money, but ended up missing them, failing to wake up in time because they got into early that day from drinking/taking drugs. During the day, particularly in the afternoon when most start to emerge, they are approached by PRs with various club/drinking offers of which some found difficult to turn down. They are pressed to ‘pay in advance’ or put down ‘€10 deposits’ to secure the once-in-a-lifetime experience. Semi-naked women working for the clubs march around with big banners advertising themed nights or particular DJs. Quite deliberately, they parade the bayside and beach area so the ideology of their promotion is fixated in the psyche of those onlooking (Briggs et al., 2011b). During the day, male groups are the main focus for the PRs because they spend more – not only on themselves, but also on potential women which they have intentions to woo. This is why male PRs
boast about how much ‘pussy’ there is in their clubs while female PRs ‘hype up’ their chances of ‘pulling a bird’.

This excessive consumption is not restricted to San Antonio. Those that do ‘escape’, and want to continue to live the ‘high life’, leave for Bora Bora on Plaja D’En Bossa. This is another beach resort on the south of the island where a more international population swank it up. The beachside bar sells bottles of beer for €7 and cocktails for €15. The young people that make it here, normally take taxis at €30, pay €10 per sunbeds or if they are feeling extravagant €30 for a double bed. Indeed, we approached to interview one group occupying such a spot. As they lie all over each other sipping Corona beers and wine, they estimate they spend between €200 per day/night:

**Dan:** Does it bother you how much you spend?

**IR1:** [Contently] Nope.

**BR2:** We save it up to spend it.

**BR1:** I worked hard to this money. I was working all year. So I work hard and now I play hard.

**BR3:** You also look forward to it.

**BR1:** Monday I will going back to work thinking ‘wish I were on holiday’. I look forward to spending it.

The group boast of drinking and taking drugs every night, with an emphasis on creating ‘experiences’:

**IR1:** Its just random, you never know what is going to happen

**Dan:** Why is important for it to be random?

**BR1:** Yeah because there is a party going on with girls and we are young and not settled.

**IR1:** Its like we’re here for a good time, not a long time.
Dan: *Ok, Ok, I see [smiling and nodding]. And what does the Ibiza experience entail?*

BR2: *Drugs, sex, beach, loving, yeah.*

IR2: *[Laughing] Sex, drugs and rock and roll in Ibiza!*

*The appeal of risk and transgression*


Jemell was part of a group of young men who beat a man up on the beach ‘for a laugh’; pretended to be professional footballers and got into VIP club areas; and paid for someone they didn’t know to get oral sex from a prostitute. In this way, because these home frameworks have been temporarily suspended, it seems to open the door to deviant behaviour – or at least behaviour which most would not be undertaken in the UK. There is no ‘work tomorrow’, no partner to say they have to be home at a certain time, few individual restrictions on who they are - because many say they can be ‘anonymous’ – and group dynamics which reinforce the opportunities to take risks and create ‘memories’. Indeed, there seems to be something appealing about the ‘crazy stories’ they construct on holiday and how they will, in turn, be useful for them in social or virtual discourse for many years to come (Tutenges and Sandberg, 2013). However, these stories are easier to create for those with high-spending power and careless attitudes to consumption. This is because the excesses and stories seem to feature largely as identity construction although, for outsiders to this social scene, it may seem more like self destruction:

Douggie: *The pills are mental here. €10 or 15 for one pill. I mean I took one on the first night and I was fucked, I couldn’t see. I blanked out 7 hours of the night. Second night I took half one and it was ok and had a really good buzz. Golden rockstars.*

Will: *I had a couple of these the first few nights and I can’t remember anything. They tell me I was doing somersaults. See the big concrete benches on the sidewalk? I smashed that and*
banged my head but I can’t even remember. And last night, I brought some random guy back here, I can’t even remember, I don’t know.

[They cheer]

**Dan:** If one pill is enough, then why take more?

**Will:** See if I go to a rave, I have to get on it. See the most I have ever taken in a night from 7pm to 4am is 22 pills and whatever else I could find.

**Dan:** 22 pills. [to Paul] What do you think about your friend taking all these pills?

**Paul:** I fucking love him, fucking right. If he lasts to the age of 30, I will be happy.

**Will:** I will be happy too but I reckon I will see 40 [laughs a little].

**Paul:** I will be fucking ecstatic.

Because we undertook these interviews in groups, we take caution to how individuals feel about their risk taking. Although, there are clues at times – even in the group context – that these risks, while appealing and exciting at the time, have significant individual implications. Those that make these admissions feel guilty and stupid about their risk taking, particularly if it goes wrong. We spoke to a group of 15 men who were publically humiliating one of the group, joking about how he ‘might have caught AIDS’ because he slept with a prostitute. It was clear that while he was receiving this public criticism, he felt bad about his actions. He blushed and downplayed the consequences. In another example, this young woman reflects on how she lost her virginity and caught an STI in the process:

**Hannah:** To be honest, I really regret it. I was really drunk and I ended up waking up in bed not knowing what had happened with this random [guy] next to me I mean its not how you would choose to remember your first time [or not remember it]. I know people say drinking isn’t an excuse but when you have no memory of what happened it obviously plays a part. I
will go back a non-virgin with an STI from sleeping with one guy in a drunken state I
definitely learned my lesson not to do that again, its dangerous and anything could have
happened to me but I obviously couldn’t handle all that alcohol I had drunk. Most of the
night is a complete blank.

In our cohort, these admissions were in a minority although we suspect that there are others
who feel this way. Still for most, the impetus for risk is for individual self-exploration, self realisation,
collective status, suspense and perhaps (depending on the particular risk event) virtual credibility
(Briggs et al., 2011b). Here, Popeye and Jay reflect on taking an E and paying for a bungee jump ride
– it was something certainly risky but all the more appealing and enjoyable knowing that the event
was recorded and would be redeemed through virtual credibility through Facebook and Youtube:

**Popeye:** I took a little one [pill] and sat in on that ride [the bungee jump ride].

**Jay:** Me too. I was on it, like ‘Fucking hell’

**Big D:** Ah man you should see the video of him, mate. It is so funny. You should see his face,
and his eyes as he goes ‘Fucking hell’.

**Dan:** Have you put it on Facebook yet?

**Jay:** No, not yet. We got it on DVD for €10 so when we get back, its going on there
[Facebook]. Its also going on YouTube, mate.

**Discussion**

While we focus on the interactions and operations of one of the main resorts on Ibiza (San
Antonio), the results reported in this article seem to be consistent with previous research conducted
in Ibiza regarding young people’s engagement in excessive consumption and risky behaviour (Bellis
et al., 2000; Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2009). We sought to advance current knowledge, based
in the main on surveys, by making use of both ethnographic and phenomenological approaches to
'capture' the group feeling and subjectivities attached to this form of holiday. Our data shows that the behaviours are not some pathology or defunct psychological attribute but present themselves in a social context designed for mass consumption (Miles, 2010); in the ‘party destination’ of San Antonio, Ibiza (Bellis et al., 2003; Calafat et al., 1998; Hughes et al., 2004) similar to other holiday contexts noted by other academics in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria (Tutenges, 2010) Majorca, Spain (Hughes et al, 2009) and Spring Break destinations in the US (Josiam et al., 1998; Smeaton et al., 1998; see also Uriely and Belhassen, 2006; Segev et al., 2005). Indeed, it seems quite fitting that the British should be able to continue this level of consumption for, at a time when British tourism is faltering (IREFREA, 2007) and the local government is concerned about their ‘image’ (Payeras et al., 2011), one way for Ibiza to sustain its income is to continue to permit the economy to extract as much money from the British as possible but strategically restrict it to a permissive area on the island – namely the San Antonio drinking strip.

Thus, Ibiza can be viewed as a holiday destination which promotes the inhibition of moral and social codes - ‘what happens in Ibiza stays in Ibiza’ - which would not normally happen in home environment (Clift and Carter, 2000). However, these behaviours do not take place in an isolated environment, but are facilitated by excessive consumption across the NTE which operates round the clock (Hayward, 2002; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007). The evidence collected from the focus groups adds weight to previous research arguing that excessive forms of consumption play a key role in the process of late-modern identity construction for young people (Oswald, 1996; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Bennett, 1999; Miles, 2010; Desforges, 2000; Hayward, 2004; Hall et al., 2008; Goulding and Shankar, 2011).

In Ibiza, and perhaps for most British youth on holiday, identities are constructed that revolve around wasteful practices such as excessive drinking (Bataille 1967; Bromley and Nelson, 2002). This is indicative of societal organisation based on consumerism (Hannigan, 1998; Hayward, 2004; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007). These identities sit on the desire to gain ‘experiences’ as great and
plentiful as possible regardless of risk, in Jemell’s case as many as possible. However, these ‘experiences’ come at a cost – they must be purchased. While this does hinge on individual behaviour and personal constraints (Sonmez et al., 2006), this attitude is constructed through the belief that while at these destinations anonymity is achieved, not constraining them to usual patterns of behaviour (Bauman, 2004) but a hedonistic life in the ‘now’ and in the immediacy of the moment (Maffesoli, 1985; Young, 1999; Hayward, 2004).

The data also indicates that for this cohort, many of whom are working-class young people, being in Ibiza and spending vast amounts of money which some don’t have perhaps acts as a way of retaining class status in the NTE (Measham and Hadfield, 2009) – just in another context. Here, they can be the ‘celebrity’; one of the elite and this is measured by spending power. Consider the views of Fred and Douglas who said they didn’t quite have the holiday capital to do ‘Ibiza properly’. It may not necessarily matter though. This is because there is an inclusive, carnivalistic spirit in the San Antonio drinking strip (Briggs et al., 2011a) and therefore there is little spatial (Bell and Jayne, 2004) or cultural (Measham and Hadfield, 2009) exclusion of the working or lower-income groups. So if they can’t be the celebrity in the club, swanking it up in the VIP lounge and throwing money at €24 cocktails, they can be the ‘crazy person’ on the drinking strip where many forms of misbehaviour are permitted. This seems to suggest that the behaviours for which they are blamed don’t seem to be reflective of any subcultural resistance, opposition or subversive intent because they show conformity to the values of excessive consumption, and thereby fall under the banner of mainstreamised values and lifestyles of consumer capitalism (Redhead, 1990; Maffesoli, 1996; Bennett, 1999 Chaney, 2004). What these youths want is not to change the social order, but to have a good time, right here, right now (Maffesoli 1985; 1988; Tutenges 2010).

With this in mind, it is easier to comprehend the motives that attract young people to Ibiza – the music, alcohol and drug scene, and escape from responsibilities and the mundane nature and everyday routine. Undoubtedly, changes to the nature of youth intoxication in the UK (Moore and
Measham, 2008; Measham and Brain, 2005; Hadfield and Measham, 2009) have some bearing on attitudes to substance use abroad. However, this is an alternative reality; an unprecedented level of liberation based on an ‘anything goes’ level of consumption (Hayward, 2002; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007) and which either promotes the formation of new identity for a limited period of time or simply reinforces one that already exists but is suppressed due to everyday constraints (work, family responsibilities). For example, when Douggie and Will amplified their ‘back home’ weekend behaviours to daily antics of social mayhem.

Combine the familiar NTE of ultimate paradise (Miles, 2010) with aggressive marketing (Sellars, 1998), individual holiday intentions for a ‘blowout’, group dynamics which promote continuous flow of pressured spending for collective ‘enjoyment’ (Briggs et al., 2011a; Mewhinney et al., 1995) and a social context which is designed to drain money from those who grace its shores (Armstrong, 2004; Garratt, 1999) makes for haphazard spending. One way of resolving this is to perhaps engage in excessive consumption which results in risky and deviant behaviours so that the ‘experiences’ that occur during the holiday not only leave ‘good memories’ but also become the receipt of the holiday transaction; something which is extracted regardless of both positive (excitement, the bungee jump experience of Popeye) and negative (guilt, regret and sense of stupidity - Hannah’s story) experiences.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the young people who participated in the research. Thanks also to Tim Turner, Keith Hayward, Ruth White, Lauren Holdup, and Paul Brindley for assisting with the project. The work was funded by the University of East London Research Framework and gained ethical clearance from the University of East London’s Ethics Committee.
References


