

HYBRIDIZATION IN TOURISM HAS BROUGHT NEW CONCEPTS



What do Glamping, Bleisure and Workation have in common? Hybrid concepts are flooding the tourism sector. Many experts use the term of the hybridization to describe these new tourist practices halfway between two segments. Noticeably hybridization in tourism offers is multiplying to reshape the sector.

The tourism sector was built on an assembly of services. When Thomas Cook proposed his first trips in 1841, it was to "use the railroad to fight alcoholism by taking English workers to the countryside". He assembled a transport offer and a visit offer while changing the profile of the worker to that of the tourist. Subsequently, the positioning of the offer was built by juxtaposing tourism activities (travel, overnight stays) with motivations (scientific, cultural, gastronomic) or practices (sports, itinerant, seaside).

Thus, staying with a local merges the host's daily life with the travelers' overnight stay and breakfast; **agritourism combines the daily activity of producers with the discovery of rural activities for amateurs**; and regenerative tourism co-constructs a sustainable and collaborative vision of the sector. In this sense, the offers cross and play with the positioning to multiply and reinvent the tourist experiences.

Combining Practices or Hybridizing Concepts

Hybrid concepts are constantly emerging to reveal trends and characterize marginal, surprising or unusual dynamics. The most popular hybridization in tourism is the emergence of Glamping (glamour + camping) which reinvents accommodation spaces with the paradox of comfort and atypical places (caravan, tepee, bus, etc.). For business travelers, it is the Bleisure trend that stands out (business + leisure) by taking advantage of trips to visit destinations. The health crisis challenges the interest and real importance of business trips, but also accelerates the emergence of new concepts: Workation (work + vacation) or Staycation (stay + vacation) to revisit local destinations. Thus, practices are merging and hybridization in tourism has become a way to promote new behaviors, on the fringe of usual practices, while remaining perfectly in line with the desire for individuality and originality of the modern traveler.

Hybrid Offers to Reshape the Sector

Most components of the sector are concerned by this hybridization trend. Presented here by field of activity, the initiatives do not hesitate to merge accommodation and leisure offers while including agile and innovative governance.

Accommodation: There are four waves of hybridization in the hotel sector. First, in the 1990s when tourist residences (long term) combined a hotel activity (short term) with hotel services (seminars, spas, etc.). Then with the arrival of lifestyle hotels. Then with a blurring of the boundaries between hotels and hostels and finally with the last wave, associated with coliving and coworking. It seems that the hospitality sector needs to rethink the models, diversify and move away from a simple accommodation offer.

Transportation: Places like train stations are reinventing themselves with changes in vocation that tend towards multifunctionality: hotel, art gallery, offices, etc. In transportation, the notion of hybrid is characterized above all by a desire to reduce the environmental impact caused by the plane or the train. For Gabrielle Halpern, a hybrid car is simply an assembly of two reciprocating engines but cannot be truly characterized as hybrid. To be hybrid, mobility must be reinvented in the manner of the Hyperloop, the multifunctional car or by questioning travelling in order to develop the transport of tomorrow.

Spaces: Today the boundaries of physical and virtual spaces are intertwined. The perception of a destination depends on its virality on social networks more than on the administrative borders that enclose it. The tourist experience becomes phygital (physical + digital) and reconfigures the tourist space according to the traveler's vision and through its virtual representation. This is the same notion that seems to constitute the horizon of the events sector. Although physical gatherings remain essential to bring together the players, digital is positioned as a complement to the activity that implies an evolution of traditional events.

Governance: The governance of tourism reflects the way in which the activity is managed in the destinations. Institutional bodies are not the only ones concerned, since it involves all the stakeholders of the destination. Sectors are coming together (public-private partnerships) and dynamics are intensifying (incubators, third places, etc.). This governance is also becoming hybrid with the development of clusters that attempt to enhance a tourist heritage by networking actors whether they are public, private, academic, resident, tourist or not. At the same time, tourism is becoming transversal and tourism institutions are disappearing in favor of more global attraction agencies. Thus, organizations are merging and reinventing themselves to find the best way to conceive tourism activity. This search for hybridity in the relationships between stakeholders remains essential to contribute to the development of an effective and efficient strategy.

Hybridization for a Revamped Offer

To truly design a hybrid society, places must be rethought in a multi-use, multi-service and multi-generational way. The Olympic Games clearly show the limits of a punctual development of activities and the damage caused to the environment, to the economy and to the sustainability of structures. **In the same way, the example of overtourism shows how essential the inclusion of the inhabitants is for the development of a balanced destination.** The hybridization in tourism will therefore be revealed by the joining of actions that are truly beneficial for the inhabitants, the residents and the destinations. By building new concepts, it means designing the sector outside the silos and proposing a constant renewal of tourism offers.

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