



# Understanding the behaviour of hypermobile tourists

Ongoing research

Begin: 01 January 2020

End: 01 June 2021

International tourism has grown considerably in recent decades, partly as a result of the growth of low-cost airlines which have become an essential sector of the global economy and a regular feature in our way of life. And yet, the explosion of tourism and in particular of air travel raises some environmental concerns. Given that 5% of French people alone contributed in 2006 to 50% of greenhouse gas emissions from tourism, the Mobile Lives Forum wanted to explore the lifestyles of hypermobile tourists. Who are they? What is the environmental impact of their mobility? To what extent and under what conditions would they be willing to change their habits to reduce their carbon footprint?

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## Research participants

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## The problem

The research combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies to better understand who are hypermobile tourists, what is the carbon footprint of their **lifestyle** and what could facilitate the transition to sustainable and desirable lifestyles.

Several hypotheses guide the research.

First, tourist hypermobility poses sustainability problems. From an environmental point of view, the lifestyles of hypermobile tourists are responsible for a large part of greenhouse gas emissions, <sup>1</sup> with differences depending on the degree of hypermobility, the choice of modes of transport, etc. Quantitative analysis should help identify the hypermobile tourists whose behaviors are problematic. This raises issues of social inequality as it suggests that a minority of the population is contributing significantly to global warming. It also assumes that this minority is made up of high-income individuals, thus exacerbating the issues of social inequality.

Second, it is hypothesized that tourist hypermobility can be explained by different inter-related factors that intervene and overlap, including:

- Classical sociological variables (income, job, family, etc.).

- Professional hypermobility that can generate either a desire to travel for leisure or, when experienced as a constraint, a desire to travel less and instead retreat to a second home.

- Global dispersion of social relations which induces the desire to maintain family and social ties.

- Social value of **mobility** and in particular flying.

- Public perceptions surrounding the efficiency of air travel.

- Social value and practicality: the choice of destination is influenced by what is socially valued (winter trips to tropical destinations and being tanned in the winter, for instance); but from a practical point of view, reaching a distant location other than by plane is complicated.

## Research plan

### Quantitative phase

The research will first rely on a quantitative phase based on data from the Survey of Tourist Demand (Suivi de la Demande Touristique, SDT), conducted by Kantar TNS.

The initial challenge is to define tourist hypermobility: at what point can one be

considered a hypermobile tourist? The first criterion is the purpose of the trip: a tourist is an individual whose mobility is for leisure. Mobility for other reasons, including professional mobility, is only taken into account in a secondary way insofar as it can help explain tourist hypermobility. To deal with hypermobility, several criteria can be used: the annual distance travelled, the number of trips or their duration. The research team will propose a definition of tourist hypermobility based on a review of the literature and an analysis of the data from the SDT survey.

Next, the researchers will conduct a statistical analysis of the data in order to understand the profile of hypermobile tourists, to capture elements of their lifestyle and to finely characterize their mobility practices. This will lead to a typology of hypermobile tourists.

The goal will also be to accurately measure the environmental impacts of tourist hypermobility and identify the most resource-consuming mobile lifestyles. These impacts are related to different factors; the most obvious one is the mode of transport used, with airplane travel by far appearing to be the most polluting. The question of distance travelled, in relation to the mode of transport used, is also fundamental for measuring the impacts of mobility. It will also be interesting to study the number of trips made in order to better define the lifestyles of hypermobile tourists.

## Qualitative phase

The second stage of the project involves qualitative research using semi-structured interviews with hypermobile tourists. The purpose will be twofold: to understand how hypermobility fits into their way of life and the aspirations that drive it, and to identify levers of action that can promote the transition to more sustainable lifestyles, all the while responding, if possible, to people's aspirations. Results are expected in the spring of 2020.

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### Notes

① DEEE, Déplacements touristiques des Français : hyper concentration des comportements les plus émetteurs de gaz à effet de serre, Hors série 11, February 2008.

### Lifestyle

A lifestyle is a composition of daily activities and experiences that give sense and meaning to the life of a person or a group in time and space.

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### Mobility

For the Mobile Lives Forum, mobility is understood as the process of how individuals travel across distances in order to deploy through time and space the activities that make up their lifestyles. These travel practices are embedded in socio-technical systems, produced by transport and communication industries and techniques, and by normative discourses on these practices, with considerable social, environmental and spatial impacts.

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Keywords : **tourism; hypermobility; environment**

Disciplines : **Social sciences**

Transport mode(s) : **All modes of transport, Airplane**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/%28https%3A//journals.openedition.org/tourisme%29/>

<sup>2</sup> <mailto:anne.fuzier@sncf.fr>

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/lifestyle-1756>

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/mobility-450>

<sup>5</sup> <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/tourism-hypermobility-environment>

<sup>6</sup> <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/disciplines/sciences-sociales>

<sup>7</sup> <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/modes-transports/tous-modes-transport>

<sup>8</sup> <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/modes-transports/avion>