

## **FILM TOURISM AS A NEW WAY TO MARKET A DESTINATION**

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- film tourism,
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- locations

### **Abstract:**

The study of film tourism is relatively new in tourism field. In the tourism industry, there has been a growing phenomenon that tourists visit destinations featured through films which are not directly related to Destination Marketing Organizations' (DMOs) tourism promotion. This is a new form of cultural tourism which still receives rising attention from both academia and practitioners. While most research has focused on the tourism-inducing effects of film productions, not much has been written about the film location tourists themselves [Roesch 2009].

Some cases suggest that films can have strong influence on tourist decision-making and films do not only provide short-term tourism revenue but long-term prosperity to the destination. Several regional and local partnerships have quickly taken these advantages and have successfully increased the number of tourists through the magic of films. This paper examines the phenomenon by reviewing previous research and practices to call for more research attention into this particular area and to outline the benefits of film in creating new attractions for a destination.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The tourism is a very complex industry, shows large regional variation, involves many stakeholders, whose interests range from major infrastructure to service facilities and attractions. A further challenge to the industry is the importance of identifying the tourists and motives for travelling. The tourism industry itself is very competitive with many new destinations trying to attract the tourists to their destinations. The days that Destination Marketing Organizations just simply promote the destinations and then wait for the tourists to visit the destinations are gone. They have to shift the conventional concept of 'selling existing places' to 'inventing new destinations to be sold'. The emphasis should therefore be on destination positioning and differentiation.

The concept of film tourism relates to tourism induced directly or indirectly by a tourist destination or attraction being viewed on screen, including film, TV, commercials and internet. This phenomenon is called film-induced tourism or movie-induced tourism (are used also terms such as screen tourism, film tourism, set-jetting). Film-induced tourism is defined as tourist visits to the destination featured on television, video, or cinema screen [Hudson, Ritchie 2006a: 387-396]. Film-induced tourism is one of the fast growing sectors of the tourism industry. The increasing popularity of film-induced tourism owes to the rise of international travel and the growth of entertainment industry [Hudson, Ritchie 2006b: 256-268]. Within the last decade film-induced tourism has gained increasing attention from academics and the industry alike.

Screen tourism attracts consumers of audio visual media who respond to the opportunity to visit a place they have seen on screen and who wish to find more information about it. Their desire to visit such destinations converts them into tourists, with the content either

providing the primary driver for visiting a place or providing something which gives added value to a region or place. The latter may result in the tourist staying longer, but it can also change the image as well as the awareness of the place for the tourist and make destinations more competitive. For some places it might even result in a prolonged destination life cycle as new visitor segments. Another effect could be the expansion of the visitor season since screen tourism is not dependent on a specific season.

The potential of films, TV, commercials and other screen products in attracting tourists to visit a destination seen on screen, is clearly evident in a huge range of products and destinations all over the world (eg. Braveheart, Wallace Monument, Scotland, 300% increase a year after release, Harry Potter, various locations in UK, increase of 50% or more in all filmed locations, Four Weddings and a Funeral, The Crown Hotel, Amersham, England - fully booked for at least 3 years after issue in the cinema) [Hudson, Ritchie 2006a: 387-396].

This paper examines the phenomenon by reviewing previous research and practices to call for more research attention into this particular area and to outline the benefits of film in creating new attractions for a destination.

This paper is divided into few sections. First, the influence of film on tourism demand is discussed. Second, the benefits of film tourism for the destination in various aspects are elaborated and the final section presents the findings on the film tourism practices of leading film tourism destinations.

## **DEMAND FOR FILM TOURISM**

Screen tourism is a phenomenon of the movement of people outside their residence and the transfer of money caused by the events, places and attractions, whose common feature is the film. Thanks to the art of cinematography are created new attractions and places, cities and regions, rediscovered, to which come more and more tourists, which brings up (or extend) the growth phase of the tourism product [Altkom 1995].

TCI Research analysis shows that nearly 40 million tourists are inspired by their favorite film. They are mainly young travelers and short weekend visitors and tourists who come to a place for the first time. In many destinations from 1 to 10% of the visitors are called film tourists. The most film journeys are preferred by the Russians, Brazilians, Indians and Chinese [„Dziennik Turystyczny” 2013].

People tend to visit particular places by specific images, memories, associations and emotional attachments to places and meanings.

According to Busby and Klug [Busby, Klug 2001: 316-332] these are the reasons for visiting movie locations:

- To follow in the footsteps of their favourite actors.
- To position themselves in the location of the film.
- To visit properties purely for their historic significance after seeing a film.
- Visiting locations included in adaptations of literary classics.
- Overseas tourists are impressed by attractive backdrops and want to visit them.
- Popular TV series have very loyal followers.

Certain films are likely to be more successful than others in attracting a number of tourists to the featured destinations. Such success involves various factors influencing film-induced tourism. The story line and site should be closely related in which the film involves the audience an emotional experience which links perfectly with the location. All these elements will become the push factors for the audience to visit the site, people, experience and fantasies portrayed by the film. The success of a film can be a good predictor of film-induced tourism.

Apart from the influence of film on tourism demand, the key questions are how to define and develop effective cooperation between the screen sector and tourism industry and what a destination can gain in investing and attracting film and TV productions to its area.

In order to answer these questions it is worth to present the economic benefits of screen productions and different examples of illustration the actual economic impacts in numbers.

## **INCENTIVES AND BENEFITS**

In order to attract film productions city or region offer different services and activities to become a film-friendly and provide incentives which can also be financial. The main role in it is played by film commissions (there are roughly 300 film commission globally, in Europe are 84 commission from 28 countries) [The Association of Film Commissioners International 2015], [European Film Commissions Network 2015].

In general, Film Commissions are organizations that are financed by local Institutions (e.g. Municipal Offices, Marshal Offices). They operate in the interest of their country or city and have been established to help people who work in the audiovisual field. The main goal of Film Commissions is to attract productions by providing aid and assistance. In order to achieve this goal, Film Commissions are involved in promoting their countries and local services.

The primary mission common to all Film Commissions is promoting and marketing their region, resulting in increased employment of local workers and the use of services such as equipment rentals, hotels, catering. A further result is an increase in tourism. While attracting business to their area, they also attract visitors. Film scenes at a particular location are in themselves „vehicles” that also promote that location as a desirable site for future tourism and industry.

Primary Film Commission activities include: marketing and promotion; finding locations; scouting expeditions and creating a link between production companies and local Institutions.

There are different incentives to attract film companies. Hudson and Ritchie [2006a] described the following five factors which need to be taken into consideration to develop screen tourism:

- Destination marketing: this is the marketing activity conducted before, during and after the release of screen product.
- Destination attributes: those are the specific factors associated with the destination such as brand and scenery.
- Film specific factors: e.g success of the film and identifiable locations.
- Locations feasibility: for example taxes, labour and resources.
- Film commission and government efforts: tax breaks, lobbying, scouting service ect.

Productions have a potential to generate screen tourism. Incentives are important tools in attracting screen productions. These incentives aim to encourage investments, promoting productions, strengthening service infrastructures in the region, creating new jobs and a growth in tourism. It is important to attract a specific type of production that lends itself to tourism promotion. Productions that showcase the destination as it is and not as a substitute for another place are particularly valuable in terms of screen tourism. It is much more complicated and expensive to increase brand awareness when a destination is used as a substitute because tourists tend to travel to the destination portrayed on screen. For example, tourists travel to Scotland in the case of ‘Braveheart’, rather than to Ireland where it was mainly filmed.

A good example of funding that focused on showcasing the destination in various ways is Malta. They offer for example an additional 2% credit to producers if the production is going to be valuable for tourism. The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) offers a cash

incentive, as well as a logistical support, to screen productions that portray 'Malta as Malta'. Certain expenditure of the production costs is covered directly by the Authority to ease the filming activities. The MTA could also give a contribution towards the following elements of the production: flights to and from Malta, transportation of cargo where there are direct routes served by Air Malta, hotel accommodation for cast and crew. Productions that are evaluated for these incentives are scrutinised by criteria including the degree to which Malta is featured in the script and whether locations featured are authentic (60% needs to be shot locally) [Månson, Eskilsson 2013].

The next example is UK. They have a creator Sector Tax Relief for Film, High-end TV and Animation offering up to 25% relief. To qualify for this tax credit at least 25% of the qualifying expenditure must be spent in the UK and the film must pass a 'cultural test' which considers the cultural content, settings, characters, use of cultural practitioners and contribution to cultural diversity. It is the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport that certifies films on the advice of the British Film Institute.

In addition to tax reliefs there is also another incentive – film funds. In Europe there is a network of regional film funds called Cine-Regio which is constantly growing and at present represents 41 regional film funds from 12 EU Member States. Most film funds are local and here different regions within countries compete with each other.

Ystad-Österlen in Sweden has a film fund applicable to those productions that shoot at least 50% in Ystad and the neighbouring areas. To qualify for the money, at least twice the amount of money needs to be spent on location [Månson, Eskilsson 2013].

Respecting Polish examples it is worth to mention Łódź Film Fund and Krakow Regional Film Fund.

Łódź Film Fund [Łódź Film Commission 2015]:

- It covers no more than 50% of film's budget.
- The funds provided by the City in 150% (100% of subsidy + 50% of own contribution) should be spent in the area of Łódź.
- The funds have to be spent the same year they were granted.
- The funds are in form of reimbursement of expenditures (on pre-, production or partially postproduction).
- Only one application per category (feature film, animation, documentary).
- Application must be filled in Polish.
- Call for applications is announced in January or February each year.
- Required: necessary knowledge and experience, also technical potential, financial situation and staff to ensure that the project can be carried out.

In particular, the contest subsidizes projects of high artistic values. The city, however, is also responsive to commercial success productions involving world film companies and significant producing companies in supporting their productions.

Following its many-year film tradition, Łódź perceives the film production in the area of the City as one of major ways of promoting its potential. The film production financial support is both to encourage audiovisual undertakings in Łódź and to provide financing, which might be in many cases quite significant for finalizing a project [Łódź Film Commission 2015].

The goal of the Krakow Regional Film Fund is to provide financial support to film productions associated with Krakow and the Malopolska Region that may contribute to the tourist and economic promotion of the region and the building of its positive image. Important factors here are the placement of the plot or the shooting locations, the film's subject and the artists responsible for it. Backed by the Krakow Film Commission, the Krakow Regional Film Fund is a strong argument in the Krakow's and Malopolska Region's efforts to win national and foreign partners in the world of cinematography [Karkow Film Commission 2015].

There are more examples of film funds available but in terms of screen tourism those subsidies that support productions which showcases the region as itself are the most beneficial for the region when it comes to tourism.

There are many partners that need to collaborate in order to successfully develop a destination. The key stakeholders for a destination are: destination management organisations, the film industry, the film commissions, tourism businesses, the municipality and its inhabitants, tourists.

Partnerships are essential in order to capitalise on the potential impact of screen products on tourism. Apart from examples of large-scale partnerships there are many local examples too. In the case of the Polish TV series *Father Matthew*, the authorities of the town Sandomierz co-operated with the production company during all stages of the production. The town supports the organization and logistic and accommodation of the film crew. In return the town received permission to use the name of the series for promotional purposes. There was no formal contract between production company and the city council. Town representatives proposed locations and they could therefore influence how the town was portrayed, which was beneficial in terms of tourism. On a local level, communication between different partners can be more productive. This is not always the case since it depends on the partners involved. It can be therefore be helpful for a tourist destination organisation, if there is no film commission, to be involved in advising on locations to develop into tourist attractions.

One of the major economic benefits that film-induced tourism can bring to the local community is enduring tourism receipts. Film locations can be all-year, all-weather attractions which alleviates problems of seasonality in the tourism industry. Riley et al. studied 12 films and found that the peak of the interest appear after the release of the film, approximately 50% increase in visitation at least five years later and the image is often retained for a long time [Riley, Baker, Van Doren 1998: 919-935].

Many film locations around the world become the pull factors for tourists to visit. The American soap opera ‘*Sex and the City*’ is one of the examples that has become such a big hit not only in the United States but around the world. Hundreds of restaurants, bars and shops featured in the film turn out to be must-see destinations for tourists visiting New York.

Another significant benefit of the film tourism is that it increases the cultural value for the film location. Many heritage sites that serve as film locations gain popularity after the film release because these places acquire specific meaning through film narration.

Film can enhance the destination image and increase the awareness of the host place. One of the most recent destinations that has largely benefited from film-induced tourism is New Zealand. Well-known films shot in New Zealand include ‘*The Last Samurai*’ and ‘*The Piano*’. The image of New Zealand has been further reinforced since it has been the backdrop of the trilogy ‘*Lord of the Rings*’. New Zealand successfully branded the destination as “100% Middle Earth, 100% Pure New Zealand” and received a lot of attention during the release of the trilogy and it is reasonable to presume that this contributed to the growth in tourism on the same time. Between 1998 and 2008 the number of international visitors increased by 52%. “The International Visitor Survey from 2004, completed following the release of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, found that six percent of visitors to New Zealand (around 120,000 - 150,000 people) cite *The Lord of the Rings* as being one of the main reasons for visiting New Zealand. One percent of visitors said that the *Lord of the Rings* was their main or only reason for visiting. This one percent related to approximately NZ\$32.8m in spend. In 2004, 63,200 visitors participated in a *Lord of the Rings* activity while here. Since 2004, an average 47,000 visitors each year have visited a film location” [New Zealand 2015].

The another example concerns an impact on the Swedish brand which used to be associated with traditional values and Sweden as a country located in the far North which do not appeal to all as a destination to visit. The ‘*Millenium Trilogy*’ created a new image



(mainly of Stockholm and other rural locations) as a modern and industry with a focus on innovation as well as social and cultural aspects. It had an especially strong impact on a French market which could be seen as an emergent segment of tourists for Stockholm (French tourists' visits have increased by 20% and the total guests nights in Stockholm have increased by 6,8% across all nationalities). It is worth mentioning that every invested Swedish korona in the project had a return of 1,5 that is for every approx. €11,5 spent, approx. €17,3 were returned. Thus, can be considered a link between the interest in visiting Stockholm and Sweden to the Millennium products (however there is no clear data) [Månson, Eskilsson 2013].

There are several cases that can illustrate this effect on single location:

**Table 1.** Impact of film on locations and visitors' number [Månson, Eskilsson 2013]

Robin Hood	Nottingham Castle Sherwood Forest, England	5,5% more visitors in 2010 7% more international visitors in 2010
Alice in Wonderland	Antony House, England	Visitor numbers quadruple from nearly 20.000 in 2008 to nearly 83.000 in 2011 after appearing in the film
Wallander series	Ystad, Sweden	The turnover in the tourism sector went from €56 million to approximately €83million in 2011; Growing number of employees in the tourism sector from 338 full time to 560 in 2011
Heartbeat series	Goathland, Yorkshire, England	Before TV production – 200.000 tourists per year, today – 1,5 million, more jobs in the local tourist sector, new hotel, products sales, extended season
Braveheart	Wallace Monument, Scotland	300% increase a year after release, from 40.000 to 126.000 visitors in 2009
Notting Hill	Kenwood House, England	10% increase in one month
Troy	Canakkale, Turkey	73% increase

Two other cases, come from Poland, where the film production has effected on the place and the tourism sector. The first is the city Łódź where the series 'Komisarz Alex' has been shot, since the summer of 2011. Łódź has been known for its industrial heritage and it has been perceived as an unattractive and sometimes dangerous city. In the series the city is shown as a modern and dynamic, full of green spaces as well as original architecture. The authorities used the TV series for online promotion via official sites, social media including Facebook and other marketing activities. Łódź is becoming interesting to visit, both for tourist but also for the inhabitants [Månson, Eskilsson 2013].

The TV series 'Father Matthew' was used as a strategic marketing tool to showcase what the region had to offer. To provide visibility of the location so that the viewer could see where it was shot, each episode started with front credits presenting recognisable places within the town as well as the name of the town and the region. The aim was that viewers could connect the region to 'the land of Father Matthew'. In this way the regional tourist organisation had an impact on the places that would be seen in the TV series which helped them to promote the overall region. People now connect city Sandomierz to the region and they have an increased familiarity. The number of tourists visiting the town has increased, the number has doubled between 2006 and 2011 (when the TV series started to be aired) [Månson, Eskilsson 2013].

It is difficult to measure the impact of a screen product on a destination. The statistics show in many cases that only a limited amount of visitors state that film is the primary reason for visiting a destination. However, tourists are not always aware of what inspired them in the

first place because there might be multiple sources. In many cases there is a clear correlation between the increase in visitors to a destination and the exposure of the destination in a screen product. Nevertheless, in relation to the cities and larger areas it is far more difficult to measure this effect.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the submitted information, films provide great impact on tourist destination choice, film-induced tourism is regarded as a complex and dynamic concept and success depends on a number of factors beyond the control of DMOs [Hudson, Ritchie 2006b: 256-268]. Generally, the success of film locations rely on the success of films. Some film locations are much more successful than others in terms of the number of tourist arrivals. Further research is needed on the critical success of the film tourism and the psychological aspects of tourist behavior in visiting film locations.

Although films provide many positive impacts for the destination in terms of economic, cultural values and destination awareness and image, drawbacks of the film should also be carefully considered. This could be undesirable consequences such as loss of privacy and the difficulty of accessing local facilities for local people, traffic congestion and the destruction of the natural environment [Hudson, Ritchie 2006b: 256-268].

Another important issue includes the residents' attitudes towards the influx of film producing crews and the large number of tourists to the film locations. Since all places are different it is important to identify all stakeholders (including residents) that are relevant for the development of screen tourism. Partnerships can take place on a regional political level, between tourist destination marketing organisation and film production companies or film commissions. It is also important to rise the awareness amongst local business to show the importance of screen tourism for developing new tourist products. A destination can receive new target groups of visitors if the new image attracts another type of tourists.

Screen tourism is seen as a new way to market the destination but the destination needs to be easily identifiable by viewers. It is important to have a clear marketing strategy in order to capitalise on the exposure of a destination in a screen product. Viewers need information about where to find the locations in real life and this is where the marketing is required. The destinations needs to be packaged and presented in a way which is attractive to tourists and easy to explore .

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