

FILM TOURISM BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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***Abstract:** Film / movie-induced / motivated tourism refers to a form of travel in which tourists / visitors explore tourist destinations (e.g., locations, production studios) extremely popular due to their appearance in films / movies, TV series / shows, or videos. Celebrity status, entertainment industry growth, and international travel have caused the increase of film / movie-induced / motivated tourism. Films like Game of Thrones, Gladiator, Harry Potter, Indiana Jones, James Bond, The Lord of the Rings provide long-term revenues for destinations due to accommodation, food, gift shops, guided tours, new jobs, photo spots, etc., hence better jobs and living standards for the locals, as well as negative environmental and social impacts.*

***Keywords:** film tourism, tourism destinations, positive impacts, revenue, negative impacts, environment.*

INTRODUCTION

Film / movie-induced / motivated tourism is a direct successor to literary tourism: “small, niche-based personal pilgrimage literary tours [turned into] the mass [...] visitation of film sites” (Beeton, 2005, in Karpovich, 2010).

In 2004, film / movie-induced / motivated tourism was still considered an “incidental tourism”, i.e., an unplanned type of tourism (Beeton, 2004; Marin Diana et al, 2015; Marin Diana et al, 2013; Petroman I. et al, 2012; Petroman I. et al, 2010; Petroman I. et al, 2013; Petroman I. M. & Văduva Loredana, 2021, Petroman I.M. et al, 2015) generating two types of collisions: between fiction (Rick’s Café in the movie Casablanca, starring Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart) and reality (a fake Rick’s Café in nowadays Casablanca) (imagine the disappointment of tourists visiting

Casablanca and being declined the opportunity of entering the fake café!), and between tourists / travellers / visitors (motivated by fictional literary / cinematic works) and locals / residents (confronted with the reality of their actual locations, tourist destinations that they divide into the front [accessible to the tourist] and the back [inaccessible to the tourist] – Tzanelli, 2004).

In another order of ideas, it is worth mentioning that motion picture movies (films) have a “pulling” potential, i.e., they are tourist-inducing attractions. Or, in other words, “movies become ‘pull’ factors [attracting the tourist to a given destination whose value is seen to reside in the object of travel] situated in ‘push’ locations [the classic tourist attractions of sun, sea and sand, or of cultural, social, and activity-based origins] (tourism generating areas)” (Riley & Van Doren, 1992, 270).

This paper analyses three types of impacts: of the relationship between the tourist and the culture (particularly film) industries, of (motion picture) films / movies, and of film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism (Popa Daniela et al, 2010; Rață Georgeta et al, 2013; Ristea I. et al, 2018; Văduva Loredana et al, 2018; Văduva Loredana & Petroman Cornelia, 2017).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The materials used in this study consist in literature on film tourism between fiction and reality in the first decade of the 21st century (a similar analysis will concern the same topic in the second decade of the 21st century). The research method used in the paper is the analytical one.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The relationship between the tourist and the culture (particularly film) industries impacts, according to Tzanelli (2004), audience, box office, cinematic agenda, communities, consumption patterns, and the cultures involved in this ‘industry’.

Audience. As in any business, the number of film / movie consumers matters for the film industry (Bolan & Williams, 2008).

Box office. This refers to the commercial success of a film in terms of the audience size (Riley & Van Doren, 1992).

Cinematic agenda. It refers to a film / movie genre that needs to be changed with a more profitable one (Zimmermann, 2004).

Communities. Communities are impacted by the film industry through the money spent by film production companies and their entourage (Riley & Van Doren, 1992; Kim et al., 2007).

Consumption patterns. “[...] the culture industry institutionalizes a production / consumption cycle in which literature and filmmaking cross and interact all the time” (Tzanelli, 2004, 22): film adaptations of popular fiction expand the experience of the text beyond its initial consumption, popularise novels / short stories and/or reconfigure their mass consumption in a new cultural milieu where computer games, souvenirs, and toys thrive – while producing cultural messages.

Cultures involved. Culture (including books and films / movies) has an exploitative potential that can be mobilized by the tourist industry through a process going from “staged authenticity” (fiction) to “authentic stage” (tourist destination). Culture (including books and films / movies) can also be appropriated in tourism consumption (for purposes of economic growth): a fantastic community (an its “way of living”) can be simulated in an “appropriate” way and the Lord of the Rings culture is appropriated as New Zealand’s new heritage. Culture (including books and films / movies) can re-invent ecotourism with eco-tourists visiting locations of the cinematic trilogy (Tzanelli, 2004).

2. (Motion picture) films / movies impact a wide range of aspects. Apart from the impact on tourism, in general (Karpovich, 2010) and on town (Beeton, 2004), the focus of literature was mainly on culture consumers: people’s attitudes / mindset towards a tourism destination (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2008; O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009); people’s daily emotions and lives (through affect, connecting story with place, introjection, repetition, and symbolic content) (Beal Kennedy, 2004); people’s images of places (Beal Kennedy, 2004); people’s perception of a tourism destination (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2008); people’s personal identity (Beal Kennedy, 2004); people’s pre-existing holiday options (Tzanelli, 2004); and tourist flow (Kim et al., 2007).

People’s attitudes / mindset towards a tourism destination. O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert (2008; 2009) conducted studies regarding tourists’ attitudes towards tourism destinations and found that film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism has very much influenced the strength of local brands, that the development of a strong brand can be a critical success factor for a destination, and that tourism has gained an increased importance as an alternative source of income.

People’s images of places. According to Zajonc (1980, in Beal Kennedy, 2004), claimed that “Emotion as basis for preferences, combined with the probability that repeated exposure to specific landscapes / places and

stories may help explain preferences for specific images or places, and, if negative emotions were aroused, aversion to others.”

People’s perception of a tourism destination. Film / movie can increase the profile and perception of a country as a tourism destination: this is the case of New Zealand, which owes its status to *The Lord of the Rings* (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2008).

People’s pre-existing holiday options. Tzanelli (2004) considers that *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy has impacted the pre-existing holiday options in New Zealand due to the success of both the book and the films based on the books.

Tourist flow. The effects of film on tourist flow in tourism literature have been discussed with issues of economic impacts to communities (business profitability, full-time jobs, industry-specific professionals and crafts people, lucrative shops, taxes), enhancement of intangible value in the host community, intangible benefits (image enhancement, increased level of awareness of the host city), negative impacts, perspective of post-modernism (nostalgia; “the deconstruction of space by film [...] and its reconstruction of the image of place, occurs as a post-tourist experience at a boundary between authentic and unauthentic worlds”), socio-cultural impact, symbolic meaning (“movie scenes expressing intimate and humane story-line themes, dramatic conversion, and the attractiveness of characters in movies [...] induce travel to featured sites seen on the movie screen”), and symbolic value (Kim et al., 2007).

3. Film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism impacts the development of a tourist destination (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2008), the disruption to the locals (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009), economy (Kim et al., 2007; O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009), locations (Kim et al., 2007), new tourist sites (Karpovich, 2010), potential consumers (Riley & Van Doren, 1992), residents (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2008; O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009), road management (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009), the experience of existential authenticity (Buchmann, Moore & Fisher, 2010), the GDP value of agriculture (Beeton, 2006), the profile of a country as a destination (Beeton, 2006), tourist destination (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009; Roberts, 2010), tourists (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2008), villages (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009), visitation (Beeton, 2006; O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009), and waste management (O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009).

Development of a tourist destination. According to O’Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert (2008), the use of a strong tourist destination branding

in the promotion of a film location can be a critical success factor for that destination since it involves its future development. From this perspective, the strategic conversations with all stakeholders (insiders) involved in the development of a tourist destination allow them to identify their views in relation to this phenomenon. What they need is a collective understanding and awareness of the brand by its target audience.

Locations. Countries are impacted by film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism: Malta, due to the making of films such as *Gladiator* and *Troy*; New Zealand, due to the making of *The Lord of the Rings*. Areas, cities, towns, and villages are locations with increased levels of tourism, i.e., with commercialization / commodification of almost anything, with pedestrian congestion, and with vehicle traffic, which seem to be the most affected by film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism (Kim et al., 2007).

New tourist sites. Even though “Most of the world’s great pilgrimage and tourist sites were established through the written media, well before the coming of film, and [that] this limits the effect that film had on actually establishing the iconic status of such sites” (Beeton, 2005, in Karpovich, 2010), there are a few cases in which “new” tourist sites – Australia and New Zealand – have been impacted by films / movies.

The profile of a country as a destination. *The Lord of the Rings* was effective in rising the profile of New Zealand as a tourism destination – with developments such as business responses to film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism, community relations with film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism and tourists, film as a destination marketing strategy, filmic tourists’ motivation, and social construction through film – but it was not equally effective in terms of driving visitation (Beeton, 2006).

Tourist destination. Films / movies have had a wide range of both positive (benefits for the local businesses, boost of the community morale, extension of the tourist season, finance, heightening the appeal of a destination, increased employment in the tourist industry, increased feeling of pride, increased location fees, increased recognizability of the destination, mass appeal, mass awareness, new hotels, product sales, production talent staying in the area, tourist influx) and negative (car parking, congestion, destruction of peace and quiet, disruption to the locals, fire risk, high amount of low spender day visitors, huge influx of tour buses, increased house prices, irritation to the local community, limited facilities, limited infrastructure, limited services, residential negativity, residential resistance, resistance between residents and entrepreneurs, spoiling the environment by erosion of footpaths, etc.) impacts on tourist destinations (O’Connor,

Flanagan & Gilbert, 2009; Roberts, 2010).

Tourists. film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism impacts tourists in the most unexpected ways. Thus, tourists buy movie maps identifying a country as the home of a film / movie; tourists buy thousands of copies of a tourism guide; tourists go visit a location even though they did not watch the film use by the destination-marketing agency; tourists go visit a location mentioned in a book though the film was shot in another location (O'Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2008).

Visitation. Films like *The Lord of the Rings* can increase tourism visitation dramatically, while films with a negative storyline discourage visitors (Beeton, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

The presentation above allows the drawing of the following conclusions:

- Film / movie-induced / motivated tourism is a literary tourism spinoff;

- There are three types of impacts of film-related activities: of the relationship between the tourist and the culture (particularly film) industries, of (motion picture) films / movies, and of film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism;

- The relationship between the tourist and the culture (particularly film) industries impacts audience, box office, cinematic agenda, communities, consumption patterns, and the cultures involved in this 'industry;'

- (Motion picture) films / movies impact people's attitudes / mindset towards a tourism destination; people's daily emotions and lives (through affect, connecting story with place, introjection, repetition, and symbolic content); people's images of places; people's perception of a tourism destination; people's personal identity; people's pre-existing holiday options; tourism; tourist flow, and towns;

- Film / movie (-induced / motivated) tourism impacts the development of a tourist destination; the disruption to the locals; economy; locations; new tourist sites; potential consumers; residents; road management; the experience of existential authenticity; the GDP value of agriculture; the profile of a country as a destination; tourist destination; tourists; visitation; and waste management.

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