

FILM TOURISM – A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY FOR NEW ZEALAND. THE WAY TOWARDS BEING THE WORLD'S TOP FILM TOURISM DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

*Film tourism is a phenomenon that has been emerging lately and. it brings a lot of benefits the filming location can take advantage of. This paper tries to present the impact that place-placement in a movie has on a destination and the key to the success of movie tourism. The data is gathered in a case study about New Zealand which is one of the best proofs of successfully influencing the influx of tourism through film tourism. All the information that was collected provides us with an inside view to the steps taken in order to increase the film tourism in this country. You can find out about the marketing activities and campaigns that sustain the image of New Zealand as the host country of the box offices *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*. One must know that this linkage between New Zealand and these worldwide known movies has to be continuously supported and improved by help of the government and specialists.*

Keywords

Film tourism, movie tourism, marketing activities, New Zealand, *The Hobbit*, *Lord of the Rings*.

JEL Classification

L83, Z3

Introduction

Mass media has been proved to have a very powerful influence on people's lives and decisions. Lately, it has turned out to be very relevant in connection to tourism and the decisions individuals make on where they will travel and spend their leisure activities.

There were a lot of researches carried out on this subject, discovering that mass media can be a powerful tool to influence the societies and it can even inside actions among them (Roesch, 2010). (Beeton, 2005) noted that the mass media plays an important role not only in the human behaviour, but also in motivating tourism behaviour. Nowadays, movies and TV series have ended up essential to what numerous individuals construct their travel choices on.

Because there are clearly a lot of economic and political benefits that come from investing in cultural events, the continued expansion of film tourism marketing activities and of film festivals is well known. Their visible contribution to the local economy comes from the expenditure of the tourist on lodging, meals, local products and different leisure activities.

In terms of an increasing competitiveness on the tourism market, placing a destination in a movie is an effective tool to raise awareness and image of it, the result of these efforts being the increase in the number of tourists through modern means of marketing.

The development of film tourism is related to the context of cultural tourism, which during most of the past century has been quite restricted and only economic elites had an easier access to it. But with the time it also developed towards the expanding middle class. Hence, the consumption of „soft” cultural products (movie sections in amusement parks, film studio theme parks), not only the visit to the location where a movie has been set and filmed, has known an increased interest from the middle class and integrated themselves in the lifestyle of middle class and economic elites.

Literature review

Place-placement in movies seems to be the new trend among the methods of placement of tourism products. Film and TV tourism can be defined as tourism to the places where a movie or TV series has

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been filmed or set. The phenomenon has only spread in the recent years, attracting a lot of interest and has become known as film-induced tourism, movie-induced tourism, cinematic tourism or even set jetting tourism. (Robinson, 2012)

Film tourism is a form of tourism that drives visitors to see screened locations during or after the production of a movie (Roesch, 2010). Hudson and Ritchie (2006) suggest that film-induced tourism includes the tourist who decide to visit a location because it was future on television, video, DVD or the cinema screen (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006).

Kim and Richardson (2003) have shown in their studies the high importance and impact that a movie can have on the location where it has been set and filmed. They suggest that a destination that is exposed to the media have a more favourable image to the tourists, than the other locations that are not exposed to any movie or media (Kim & Richardson, 2003). Although not done enough studies about place-placement have been done, there are a lot of general information about film tourism, like the influence that a movie can have on the decision of people to travel, on the number of tourist to the shooting locations and the marketing activities of this specific area. The beneficial influence of this type of marketing can be seen in the seasonality feature of tourism. Beeton specifies that movie tourism is a type of tourism that brings visitors to a place all year round, regardless of the time or weather, and it also has long-term effects. (Beeton, 2005)

Most of the academic work related to film tourism has focused on fictional movies and TV series. The popular media gives us the stories of what can be considered "blockbuster tourism", such as The Da Vinci Code, The Lord of the Rings trilogy, the James Bond franchise and the Harry Potter series. Hence, many were lead to conclude that a popular movie will automatically induce people to visit its sites and settings.

Before the beginning of the twenty-first century, research into the relationship between film, TV and tourism was sporadic and incidental, with the earlier researchers tending to release a few journal articles and then move on the other research areas. This is quite common in the field of research such as tourism, where there is still so much to explore, and our interests often move elsewhere. However, since the publication of Film-Induced Tourism (Beeton, 2005), we have seen an increase in the interest and on-going research into this field. While the subject continues to be dominated by studies that do little more than replicate what is already known, a strong push towards developing further knowledge in this field is emerging.

There are some stimuli that drive a tourist to visit a certain place are the scenery and landscape, the theme, the events and the actors, the storylines, the ability of promoters to link the place to certain feelings, attitudes or emotions. According to a study made by Simon Hudson and JR Brent Ritchie, among the factors that influence the film tourism the marketing activities have a high importance. These marketing activities can be classified in activities before the release (which includes also all the activities done during the production period) and activities after the release.

Activities before release:

- encouraging producers to make films in their region
- appointing PR specialists to place a location in movies
- employing a product placement specialist to increase the number of movies made in a specific location
- negotiating credits for being used in the movie
- working with the producer's publicist in order to transmit a consistent messaging about the location sets and its merits as a destination
- publicity around the activity of the actors while on the location
- the implication of Destination Marketing Organisations in marketing partnerships

Activities after release:

- advertising
- marketing campaigns
- promotions done during the screening of a movie
- collaborative campaigns with the film industry
- movie maps
- guided tours and film walks

- promotion of hotel, guest houses, attractions and museum used in the movies
- having a dedicated website that links the film to locations and location tours

As Beeton states, not only the places of filming are part of film tourism, but also locations of movie premiers and film festivals are included in this type of tourism. He also considers that film tourism resembles to the action of pilgrimage. It helps people to discover a sense of belonging, because they meet the tourists with the same interests. They usually travel in groups and they are interested to socialize, to discover and to share knowledge and opinions. Hence, the similarity between film tourism and pilgrimage has a lot to do with the feature of communality, the contemplation of something and the feeling of belonging. (Beeton, 2005).

Between the film tourism, we can distinguish many types of tourist. In his research, Tanskanen has emphasize the difference between „film location tourist” and „film tourist”. Even though both are driven by the influence of movies, film tourist just visit the places (country, city, area, etc.) where the film was shot, while film location tourists are interested in visiting the location sets, the technical part and physical settings used. (Tanskanen, 2012)

The success of film tourism doesn't happen in all of the cases. There are movies and TV series that encourage a huge amount of tourist to visit the place where they have been filmed or set and there are places where this is not happening, or where it is needed more than one movie alone to increase the tourism. Therefore, it comes the challenge of finding out how we can predict the film and TV tourism success. Many of the researchers showed: that the success of film tourism comes from what began as a popular book that was released as a movie or TV series and here we have some examples like: The Da Vinci Code, The Lord of the Rings (Beeton, 2005), or from a high number of movies being set and filmed in a specific location - the most relevant example in this case is the famous New York City. Because these very big blockbusters can have a huge impact on the amount of tourist in the specific area. There for, the next step in developing was and it is for entrepreneurs to get involved and take advantage of this profitable context by creating products and different packages related to the movie. Some examples can be movie tours, movie maps, themed hotels or restaurants. (Roesch, 2010)

Methodology

The main research method used for this thesis is qualitative research. There is still not enough literature written in this field of tourism, so some internet sources needed to be used beside the few literature sources for researching the theory of this topic.

The assumption that stay as the basis of this paper are that successful film tourism comes from the linkage between a popular book that is released as a movie or TV series and that marketing activities are very important in promoting a location as a film tourism destination. The literature pointed a positive attitude of destinations becoming more attractive after they were placed in blockbusters. Hence, to determine the validity of these hypotheses, the following questions have been examined during my research analysis:

1. What happened, from the point of view of tourism, to the locations where bestsellers were filmed and transformed into successful movies?
2. What does statistics show about the tourism of these locations?
3. What marketing activities were helpful in promoting a destination that appeared in a movie?
4. What conclusions and recommendations could be put forward in light of the findings of this research?

To answer the research questions, secondary research was carried out. These secondary research included a literature review and the analysis of several scientific articles and online journal articles.

Results and discussion

New Zealand – Case Study

Our research and data collected show us that movies can influence travel choices.

One of the best examples, lately, has been New Zealand, which has been voted the world's top film tourism destination. It placed number one in a study commissioned by HBO Entertainment in 2015 about destinations made famous by movies and television. This study analysed the responses of 2000 adults and according to the results, one in four people choose their holiday destination based on the

movie set they would like to visit and find out more about. New Zealand also recently placed third in USA Today's 'Best Cinematic Location' poll.

According to the study carried by HBO Entertainment, the 10th places in Top 30 TV or Movie Destinations, look like this:

1. New Zealand – Lord of the Rings
2. New York, USA – Sex and the City
3. The Causeway Coast and Glens, Antrim, Northern Ireland – Game of Thrones
4. Las Vegas, USA – The Hangover
5. West Bay, Dorset, UK – Broadchurch
6. Alnwick Castle, Northumberland – Harry Potter
7. Paris, France – Inception
8. Benidorm, Spain – Benidorm
9. Iceland – Game of Thrones
10. Malta – Game of Thrones

Film industry has been rapidly growing in New Zealand. It has shown an increase in revenues from movie production of \$7 million in 2014, reaching the value of \$3.155 billion. Working alongside with New Zealand Film Commission and Film New Zealand, the Tourism New Zealand succeeded to access opportunities of marketing and media impact to promote the country as an exceptional tourism destination.

The movies that transformed New Zealand from a country known for dairy exports into a world leader in film tourism have been the six Lord of the Rings and the Hobbits. These movie are one of the most successful franchises of all times, with earnings of billions of dollars. The studio that produced them is Warner Brothers – American entertainment company – one of the major film studios with the headquarters in Burbank, California. Hence, tourism is currently the second largest industry in New Zealand, after dairy.

Statistics

In an interview taken by the Forbes Magazine in 2012, the general manager of Western Long Haul Markets for Tourism New Zealand, Gregg Anderson, stated that there has been a 50% increase in arrivals to New Zealand since the first movie from the trilogy Lord of the Rings came up in 2001.

The tourism in New Zealand has been emerging ever since. Starting with the release of the first Hobbit, in 2012, visitor arrivals have hit a record annual rate of 2.83m.

According to a research carried out by New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, the Hobbit related marketing campaign for promoting the country as the Middle Earth has had an important impact on visitor growth from Western markets. The survey showed that a mean of 10.5 % tourists say the Hobbit films influenced their decision to travel to New Zealand.

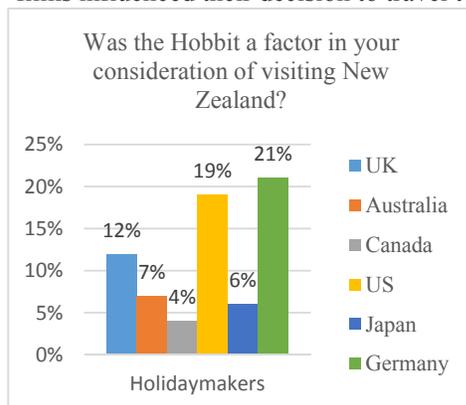


Figure 1 Was the Hobbit a factor in your consideration of visiting New Zealand?

Source: NZIER, 2014

Figure 1 shows the effectiveness of the marketing campaign, by counting the visitors that chose New Zealand as a holiday destination because „The Hobbit” was filmed there. The US, the UK and Germany occupied the first places. The results also showed that people from UK spend more in New Zealand than in any other destination; hence, the country can be considered a premium destination.

Tourist chiefs say a surge in spending by tourists from premium markets such as Germany, the US and UK can only be explained by film tourism. One in five visitors took part in some form of film-related tourism over the past 12 months. (NZIER, 2014)

Film-making incentives

Film-making incentives like tax rebates or grants, are instruments that sustain the promotions and marketing.

Because the New Zealand government has recognised the benefits of these incentives, they extended the tax incentives for large scale productions.

Warner Brothers considered changing the filming location to Eastern Europe for the production of *The Hobbit*. That was the moment when the government stepped in and made the offer and the changes. Because losing the production of *The Hobbit* would have meant a loss of about \$1.5 billion, the intervention of the state was necessary.

In 2007, the Economic Development Minister Trevor Mallard took measures to assure New Zealand will remain an attractive and competitive location for movie producers. Therefore, improvements to the Large Budget Screen Production Grant (LBSPG) were made.

These changes were:

- Increasing the grant to 15% of the New Zealand expenditure for the production from the current 12.5%;
- Removing the current requirement for at least 70% of the production expenditure to be spent in New Zealand for productions between the NZ\$15 million and NZ\$50 million range;
- Allowing several productions costing a minimum of NZ\$3 million each to "bundle" together to qualify for the grant by meeting the requirement for qualifying expenditure of NZ\$30 million;
- Adding an incentive to use New Zealand-based post-production digital and visual effects services with qualifying expenditure of between NZ\$3 million and NZ\$15 million;
- Allowing a production or bundle of productions to pre-qualify for the grant;
- Allowing very large productions to access their grant each time their expenditure goes over the NZ\$50 million mark. (Swire, 2007).

In April 2014, it was introduced the New Zealand Screen Production Grant. By help of this program, international productions can access up to 20% baseline grant. If they prove to bring other additional benefits for the country, they can have an additional 5% to this grant. Among these other benefits, as assessment criteria, there are promoting, marketing and show casting New Zealand as a destination for tourists. The institution that is in charge of managing this grant is the New Zealand Film Commission. "The trilogy has engendered a huge industry even though only very little of the original set remains. With the purpose of protecting New Zealand's natural environment, it was agreed that the many huts, fortresses and so on were to be dismantled when the production ended. One element still remaining is the hometown of the hobbits, which was constructed in a locality within the Waikato region. The construction of the set involved artificial leaves – imported from Taiwan – affixed to dead trees within the locality. This slightly odd set still stands – now featuring as "The Hobbiton Movie Set and Farm Tour" – commented the authors of the handbook "Experience films in real life – a handbook on film tourism" (Christophersen, 2012).

New Zealand- Home of Middle Earth Campaign

Ever since 2001, when the first film in the trilogy, *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* was released, New Zealand has been successfully marketed as the home of Middle Earth.

Middle-earth (See Annex 1) „is the setting of much of J. R. R. Tolkien's legendarium. The term is equivalent to the term Midgard of Norse mythology, describing the human-inhabited world, i.e. the central continent of world of Tolkien's imagined mythological past.

New Zealand's dramatic scenery - golden plains, towering mountains and enchanting valleys - plays the mythical world of Middle-earth on the big screen in both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* Trilogy. In order to be promoted as a tourism destination, the 100% Pure Middle-Earth, 100% Pure New Zealand marketing strategy was implemented. Through marketing and PR activities, Tourism New Zealand worked to attract tourist to experience the landscape of Middle Earth, the activities and to embrace the people's lifestyle.

„Tourism New Zealand worked in partnership with Warner Bros. Pictures to leverage *The Hobbit* Trilogy. This included PR activities prior to, during and after each film's premiere.

PR activity included:

- Tourism New Zealand hosted world-class international media outlets such as China- CCTV- (6.3m viewers), TF1 France (3.8m viewers) and Sky Movies UK (10.7m viewers) at real Middle-earth locations and experiences.

- International media were provided with real Middle-earth destination content such as footage, imagery and written content.
- Tourism New Zealand had a strong involvement with the movies' international world premieres including a presence on the red carpet, and food and wine events in uniquely New Zealand settings such as The Book of New Zealand and a real Hobbit Hole at Claridge's Hotel in London.
- Middle-earth provided access to high profile celebrities with influence. This included cast from the movie as well as other celebrities with an interest in Middle-earth such as actress Yao Chen from China whose visit generated 34,697 stories.

Marketing activity included:

- Three Middle-earth TVCs which showed tourists the real locations and experiences they can enjoy in New Zealand - the real Middle-earth.
- Three 'New Zealand Home of Middle-earth' DVD featurettes with cast endorsements including their own personal experiences filming and exploring the real Middle-earth New Zealand.
- A Middle-earth hub on consumer website newzealand.com providing consumers with interactive digital content on Middle-earth locations and experiences. (Tourismnewzealand.com, 2015)

Other supporting marketing activities. There are branded planes, coins, stamps and an entire marketing strategy around the movies to attract people to the country where they were filmed and featured heavily.

Stamps and coins. The country's postal service New Zealand Post started to mint uncirculated coins and print stamps with the faces of the characters from Middle-earth, in order to commemorate the upcoming of the movie "The Hobbit" (See Annex 2).

The coins range from a NZ\$1 coin retailing for about \$24. 43 U.S. dollars, to a NZ\$10 coin made from pure gold that costs about \$3,019.53.

Entertainingly, the New Zealand Custom Service currently stamps visitor's passports with a "Welcome to Middle Earth" stamp (See Annex 3).

Air New Zealand. The company Air New Zealand had been investing a lot in promoting Hobbit themed activities. More than \$100 million have been used to decorate their airplanes with decorations and images from the movies (See Annex 4). They have 2 airplanes that use the "tolkienesque" themes in their decoration.

Not only were their airplanes used in the promotion, but also other assets of the company. Air New Zealand integrated elements from The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings into their safety video, which proved to be an ingenious way to ensure that everyone who use their services will see the linkage and will associate the image of the company with the country and the movies. The first version of the safety movie had been very successful and it had gone viral on the internet. Because millions of people watched it on You Tube and it showed an important impact on people, the 2nd version of it was made and promoted before the flights.

The Elvish – "Calan vain, Ennor! Sí abgen edregol an i Laer ovol". To celebrate the release of The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey in New Zealand, a Kiwi weather reporter gave his forecast in Elvish. Tourism New Zealand's Chief Executive Kevin Bowler stated that the idea of broadcasting the forecast of New Zealand as the weather of Middle-earth was another step in sustaining the 100% Middle-earth, 100% Pure New Zealand campaign.

Conclusions

Looking at all the data gathered, we can state that indeed, movies made upon best-seller novels had brought an increase in the number of tourists for the set locations. But what helped the locations achieve the goal of becoming a top film tourist destination is a proactive participation of governments and specialist in marketing activities.

Even though researches have shown film tourism as a considerable market, in order to have a successful film tourism, there is a need for a wide cooperation between a lot of parties involved like producers, screen agencies, film commissioners, tourism agencies, PR specialists, DMOs and government. Being a place that presents interest for the movie producers demands creating an attractive image and that can be done by help of active promoting, tax refunds, collaborations with marketing specialist and a language skilled workforce.

Film tourism is about recognising the movies that will have potential to become cultural phenomenon's and to induce tourism, just like *The Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*. An important step in this process is to hit for the movies that are produced after best-sellers books. But things does not end here. It is important to bring additional attention to the location, by involving the actors and the entire shooting crew (celebrity statements and video diaries can be some examples).

The film tourism requires a lot of attention after the release of a movie. In order to create a long term positive effect on the tourism industry, there are a lot of marketing activities to be done and most of them refer to marketing campaigns. Movie maps, guides, theme parks can be used as marketing tools. Also, the existence of a website is one of the most important elements.

Overall this research paper has been very educational and it left a lot of questions that would be nice to further investigate. The objectives established in the beginning of this process were reached by analysing different data sources – process that brought a lot of interest and attractive information which otherwise, personally, I would not ever discovered.

What I have learn about in the case study about New Zealand is that being a powerful film tourism destination requires a lot of efforts and involvement.

I believe that our country has a lot of potential for being an attractive location for different projects of movie production, but there is no involvement of the authorities to promote Romania towards this area of activity. The first step to attract movie producers and big worldwide entertainment companies is by marketing our locations and by trying to encourage producers to film here. The DMOs and other organisation for tourism can engage in a variety of activities that would promote Romania. If the country succeeds in accessing this market, it would discover that destination placement in movies and TV shows is a marketing vehicle that increases awareness, enhances destination image and results in significant increases in tourism and economy.

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Annex 1 – Middle Earth Map



Annex 2 – The Hobbit Coins and Stamps



Annex 3 - „Welcome to Middle Earth” stamp



Annex 4 – 777 Airplane

