

MOVIES AS A TOOL OF MODERN TOURIST MARKETING

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The contemporary tourist market hosts intense competition amongst countries and particularly amongst those that their economy is supported, to a rather critical extent, by tourism business. All countries try to promote their tourist products using various marketing techniques. International experience reveals that movies constitute an important marketing tool which can effectively serve the strategy for promotion of tourism destinations. Landscapes, significant heritage sites, festivals, attractions and historical monuments have quite often been selected as film shooting locations. Evidence shows that such films may, under certain circumstances, induce "film tourism", a phenomenon where local economies eventually enjoy an increase in visitor numbers and related benefits after the circulation of the relevant movie.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the fine arts, movies combine plastic arts with dramatic arts. The fundamental component of filming is drama and the motion of picture, in contrast to other plastic arts as photography and painting. Namely, the heroes in the movies alter their attitudes and statures while the scenic environment is changing. Therefore film-producers are in constant search for suitable locations in both, urban or natural environment. In most cases the locations have to be pure, idyllic or peculiar, but in every case sites that are interesting and suitable for movie settings.



In this selected environment (Reeves, 2001) the scenes of action, relaxation, eroticism and anything that the screenplay requires will unfold. It is obvious that the play-writing of the movie gives intensity in the settings, while the scenery frames the action and also molds the sentiments of both the heroes and spectators. The sentiments emitted to the spectators, are implied to a significant degree by the action, the heroes and the settings. Thus a strong motive is generated to the spectators to visit the location, in the framework of their conscious or unconscious identification with the hero of the movie. This, provided that the settings of movie are in natural or civil environment, constitutes a first class opportunity of the location to be identified as a potential tourist destination.

DEFINITIONS

Film tourism has also been referred in the international bibliography with the terms “film induced tourism”, or “media induced tourism”, or “movie induced tourism”, or “cinematographic tourism”, or even “media pilgrim” seen as a media pilgrimage (Horrihan, 2009). Next, a variety of definitions are investigated.

Busby and Klug (2001) have suggested that cinematographic tourist is the tourist that visits a destination or attraction because it appeared in a movie, video or television. Next, Iwashita (2003) claimed that films, television and literature, are factors which expose the particular characteristics and attractions of a destination and, because of that, can influence the travelling preferences of individuals. Later, Macionis (2004) defined film tourism, as a post-modern experience of the tourist in a site, which has been depicted in some form of media. This experience is personalised and unique to each individual, because it depends on his own interpretation of media images.

Hudson and Ritchie (2006), suggest that film tourism is the tourism that is generated as a result of the appearance of a destination or attraction in the cinema, video or television. Trying to analyse the study of this phenomenon they identify four big categories of analysis: First, the estimation of the distinct influence of the film on travel decision. Second, the formation of specific categories of film tourists. Third, the measurement of the effects of films on the number of incoming tourists and on the life of residents. Finally, the analysis of destination marketing activities that concern film tourism.

DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION

According to Butler (1990), people often choose their tourist destination depending on what they have seen at popular audiovisual means, like television and cinema. The process of the influence caused by the image can be voluntary, involuntary, accidental, conscious or unconscious. He also suggests that as lately people read less, anything appearing in films and in television penetrates easier into society.

According to Gartner (1993), the process of shaping a destination image is constituted by eight different factors. Specific weight is set on the role of autonomous factors like “the news” and “the popular culture”. Ten years later Hyounggon and Richardson (2003), point out that in contrast to the elitist or fringe culture, which influences small percentage of population, the popular culture strengthens and reflects models of communication and consumption for the wider general public. The movies are an important fragment of the popular culture. They can ensure essential information on a destination, in short time and to many persons.

As regards the role of popular culture in shaping of a “destination image” in the framework of tourism, Urry (2002) claims that one of the basic reasons that motivate tourists to visit a location, are the expectations that these people may live different experiences from what they would live in their home location. These expectations are cultivated with tourism attraction practices like films, television, literature, magazines and videos. Relevantly, Morgan and Pritchard (1998) point out that the force of manufactured reality promotes the sovereignty of senses on the objective reality.

“Product placement” is a method of marketing and has been defined as the planned entry of products into movies or television shows, with the purpose to influence favourably the spectators’ view, beliefs or behaviours.

Schofield (1996) suggests that modern tourists shape “destination images” through consumption of films and movies in television, without the prejudice that these are a promotional material. Morgan and Pritchard (1998), suggest that a destination placement in a film is the ultimate in tourism product placement. Finally, Russell (2002) found after research that the product placement in a film setting and the consequent viewing by the public is very effective as a promotional method for a destination.

It seems therefore plausible that while traditional advertising techniques have realized diminishing effectiveness, communication via product placement is better targeted, more sophisticated and more widely received.

Some pieces of research show the effect on tourism of destinations in relation with their placement into movies. Riley, Baker and Van Doren, (1998) after research that they carried out for the cases of 12 films, observed that the film location draw greatest attention when the film was released. However an increase of visitors of 54% occurred for at least five years after the release of the film.

Thus, one important economic advantage stemming as a result from the reviewed literature is that the film tourism has duration in time and can continue bringing visitors in a destination for several years after the first screening. Another advantage is that film tourism reduces the problem of seasonal tourism. Film locations, usually have attractions and sights that are accessible and draw the interest of visitors at any time and at all seasons.

To conclude, the power of film and television is revealed in contributing to the formation of the image of a destination, in stimulating tourism demand and in facilitating the positioning and segmentation elements of the local marketing strategies.

THE ROLE OF DESTINATION TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

In the modern worldwide tourist reality the tourist growth is accompanied by the need for more rational, more coordinated and more efficient management of resources that contribute to the formation of tourist product. The complexity and the multi-disciplined substance of the tourism sector, diffuses the allocation of benefits in a big number of other involved sectors. The penetration of the “product”, i.e. a tourist destination, in the tourist markets is difficult and the cost of the promotion is high (Stylidis et al., 2008; Machlouzarides, 2010). The benefits for a private enterprise would be dispersed and vague and thus emerges the necessity for public institutions to involve – or undertake- the destination tourist marketing.

Local Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) strive to develop adequate marketing strategies for the efficient promotion of tourist destinations. Their task is to suggest marketing opportunities and to stimulate and support the development of the proper climate for exploitation of these opportunities.

The World Tourism Organization groups the various DMOs, that are responsible for managing the marketing efforts of their destinations, in the following categories: National Tourism Authorities or Organisations, which are responsible for management and marketing of tourism at national level, regional, prefectural or provincial DMOs, and local DMOs

which are responsible for management and/or marketing of tourism in smaller geographic area or city/town.

The structure and the status of DMOs set-up differ from country to country, as offices, unions, services, committees, departments, councils, ministries, etc. Depending on the pattern of administrative set-up, they can be distinguished according to their operations, their targets and their means of financing. This relates to the centralised or decentralizing character of the administrative mechanism of each country, as well as to the importance that tourism has for the country's economic growth .

Today a tendency of increase in the number of DMOs is observed internationally, which implies that the necessity of their existence is recognized, as well as the positive contribution of their work in the promotion of destinations.

Today DMOs play a main role for each tourist destination mainly because they are considered as official, unbiased and complete source of information. They also possess and control the "commercial brand name" of the destination. Finally DMOs have the possibility of offering a wide spectrum of services and support to the consumers, while they maintain particularly close relations with the suppliers of the tourist product.

SPECIFICATION OF STRATEGY AND FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Due to the development of new destinations, specific branding strategies and the fracturing process of the mass tourism, many DMOs shift their marketing emphases away from promoting generic tourism activities of escape, enjoyment, sightseeing and shopping, to tourism of special interests. Film tourism appears to be a part of the game. The challenge for DMO's is to efficiently create and utilise film induced tourism, including product development and presentation as well as the follow-up implications of destination marketing and branding.

Hudson and Ritchie (2006) after research in 490 DMOs worldwide, found that almost all organisations have to work with marginally sufficient economic and human resources and can only difficult keep pace with the necessities of innovative strategies of publicity. They also found that the investment of money in the promotion of film tourism includes risk, because there is no guarantee for a positive outcome.

More specifically 60% of the sample answered that they observed an increase in the number of visitors because of their efforts to develop film tourism, while some 78% developed collaboration with film producers. The basic profits that were reported were: the strengthening of the image (brand) of the destination, the increase of the number of tourists and the

positive economic effects, however not measured systematically. From those that have replied to the survey, very few reported problems in their region due to film tourism. Finally, Hudson and Ritchie, propose a plan of 31 marketing activities, ranked by importance, proposed to be undertaken by the Destination Marketing Organisms (DMO), before and after the film release, in order to maximize the profits of film tourism.

Olsberg-SPI carried out a survey on behalf of the UK Film Council, Scottish Screen, EM Media, Screen East, South West Screen, Film London, the DMO of East Midlands Tourism and Visit London. They examined 31 case studies and selected 9 cases as points of reference. There, the cinematographic tourism was handled with success in the respective regions. The researchers' main target was to describe the type of cinematographic films and television series that cause the development of film tourism in a region. Further on, to identify the strategies required to be applied in Great Britain, to maximize the economic profits by the cinematographic tourism.

Literature shows that the promotional activities stem mainly from public tourist institutions or private tourist enterprises or in collaboration of both. Their aim is to stir-up tourist interest with a lengthy cinematographic product life cycle (pre-release acts, premiere, DVD release, and after), as well as to inform tourists for the film locations. Of particular importance is the ability of DMOs to negotiate with the film producing companies, aiming to attract the shooting of films in their own regions, and also to negotiate about what the region will acquire from the producers as a benefit.

In the above context, several DMOs hire experts of public relationships in order to promote their region in the cinematographic studios. Canada and the Bahamas, for example, have engaged Weber Shandwick, one from the most important personalities in public relationships in the world, in order to achieve their region's maximum possible appearance in films. Chicago's Office of Film and Entertainment Industries, has successfully increased the number of films that was shooting in Chicago by engaging an expert in products placement. After the terrorist act of 11th September the local organisation of tourism of New York used personalities of sports, movie stars and also the ex-Mayor Rudolf Giuliani for the reinforcement of tourism in the city. At the same time, the respective organisation of Washington used the leading stars of television series "The West Thing" that unfolds in the capital and has relation with life around the White House and the Capitol, aiming the reinforcement of tourist visits.

The Department for Tourism and Travelling Development of Kansas allocates annually 1.2 million dollars for the tourist promotion of the State as a film location. The Ministry of Tourism of Singapore (Singapore Tourism Board), in 2004 announced three-year plan of expense of 7 million dollars in order to attract international film producers.

The National Council of Tourism of Australia invested some 40 million dollars in an international advertising campaign based on the film "Australia", showing the wild beauty of Western Australia. The Organisation of Tourism of Australia, appreciates that the campaign "See the movie - see the country", in combination with other promotional activities, will act as catalysts in motivating tourists to visit the country and also in intensifying internal tourism. The particular campaign has been the second high budget campaign in national level. The first concerned in the trilogy of "Lord of the Rings" and the destination New Zealand.

The strategy of DMOs as regards the negotiations with the film companies is important. It depends on what the destinations can offer so as to have the opportunity to control which destination sites will appear in the movie. Also to foresee for other profits that may originate from the premiere and the distribution of film. The implementation of a strategy in attracting film producers is more effective in the –early- stage of planning the production of film. It is important for the DMOs to establish an efficient public relations department or to assign an independent public relations company in order to strongly promote the destination as the best location for film shooting. Finally, an important factor is always the budget that is committed to this aim.

CONCLUSIONS

The image that we construct for a country is often the sentimental image that has been created in our minds from narrations of other persons, from books and, to a large extent, from watching films that have been shot in the country, utilizing the natural and built environment, the history, certain types of residents etc, for the plot of the script.

Cinema systematically functions as a mean of escape from the everyday routine and this characteristic is in common with tourism. Precisely for this reason, many times, our choice for our vacations destination is a place about which we have shaped a concrete sentimental image. Most of us have combined the essence of romanticism with the city of Paris because big studios have used Paris as the setting for a lot of romantic comedies. This process leads the spectator to identify himself

among the heroes of film and unconsciously to want to experience a piece of the plot and thus to seek to be in the corresponding environment.

Cinema develops characters, while an advertising tourist spot tries to pass a message. The difference in the sentimental memory of spectator is very important. A spot can be shown many times during a period, however after the campaign it seldom remains in the spectator's memory. In contrast, the cinematographic film has long-lasting effect because it approaches the spectator satisfying his aesthetic preferences and his sentimental or ideological concerns. Thus the spectator has the tendency to come back to this. The purchase of the soundtrack and the re-watching of film in video or DVD is characteristic of the trend. This process adds-in specific value for the tourist development of a region.

It is important for the local and national Organisations of Tourism, the tourist policy makers, to work out studies for the long term tourist utilization of cinematographic films that have been shot in their regions. The incorporation into the recognizable local tourist product strengthens the uniqueness of the destination, strengthening its brand name and tourist attractiveness. The cinematographic tourism is a very powerful tool of tourist marketing and requires careful strategy planning by the Destinations Marketing Organisations. Finally, concern should be given to support the locations aiming to experience increased tourist in-flows with adequate infrastructure and services.

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