

The Role of Film in Destination Decision-Making

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to create a method and measure the influence of fictional film media in potential tourists' destination decision-making, using a quasi-experimental method. Film tourism researchers have implied that film plays a direct role in generating tourism. In this research, however, it is proposed that film plays an indirect role through the construction of meaning of place, and therefore destination awareness, availability and evaluation.

A two-part multiphase quasi-experimental method was created and implemented to identify change in a destination's image due to watching a film. Part One was qualitative in nature and implemented to discover destination image attributes (evaluative components and decision-making factors) used in destination selection (survey n=202, in-depth interviews n= 10). Part One concluded with the compilation of a list of relevant, clear and efficient attributes for Part Two. The list maintained sufficient diversity to define destination image, and was composed of 21 decision-making factors and 40 evaluative components. Part Two then measured the destination's image, and change in that image due to watching a feature film (pre and post survey n=67). Change in this quasi-experimental method was assessed by the **importance** of the attributes being measured, the **influence** of the film on these attributes and most importantly the combined **effect** of the film on these attributes.

The Vertical Ray of the Sun, a film set in Vietnam, was used to apply and test this innovative quasi-experimental method. The application assessed not only the effect of the film on Vietnam's image, but also the applicability of the method. The film positively influenced the respondents' image of Vietnam. The film had a measured **effect** on more than half of the attributes. That noted, the actual number of attributes affected to the marked level were 17 out of 61 for the difference in means and only 11 for the η^2 value. Consequently, whilst the film positively affected the image of Vietnam, most of the attributes still needed significant change to modify tourism demand.

The thesis importantly contributed to the study of destination image methodologically by asserting the need to assess the importance, influence and effect. This new method can and should be implemented to assess and monitor the effects of many events. This research also contributed by introducing a quasi-experimental cumulative importance-influence measure of effect. The contribution was highlighted in that those attributes with a large influence did not always have a large effect on the destination's image. Neither performance by itself, nor importance by itself, can be used as a final effect measure.

Finally, this research supports other film-induced tourism studies: film does influence destination image. As presented in more recent studies film-tourism is more likely to be an incidental experience than a reason to visit a place. These more recent studies too may underplay the role of film by focusing on film as an attraction or activity, rather than its role in the actual decision to visit. This research has contributed to film tourism research by highlighting that film can still play a role in the decision-making process, even though it may not be an attraction or a desired experience in itself.

Profile

Glen completed his PhD in the Department on film's role in destination decision-making, under the supervision of Professor Mike Hall and Associate Professor David Duval. After leaving Otago, Glen was a lecturer in the Bachelor of Tourism Management at Waiariki Institute of Technology, Rotorua. At Waiariki he taught across a number of units, with another Department of Tourism graduate Dr Nell Smith. Glen was then employed by in the Department of Management at Monash University in Melbourne. He is a lecturer in tourism and an active member of the Tourism Research Unit. At Monash Glen has continued his research interest in media and tourism, and has co-hosted the International Tourism and Media (ITAM) conference in 2004, 2006 and 2008. This conference was co-hosted with the Department of Tourism, University of Otago in 2004. He has also been a research team member on STCRC projects, largely in the context of natural and protected areas. Glen has been awarded the Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence (2005), a Dean's Commendation for Teaching Excellence (2007), and a finalist in the CAUTHE Award for Tourism and Hospitality Education (2009).