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Applying a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative design in explaining the travel motivation of film tourists in visiting a film-shooting destination

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HIGHLIGHTS

- A mixed method explains the behaviors of outliers without having to delete them from analysis.
- Follow-up interviews complement the limitation of the self-complete questionnaire survey.
- Qualitative results help explain unexpected travel motivations of specific film tourists.
- The size of special-interest tourists on film tourism is small (10.5%).
- Both leisure and business tourists can be specific film tourist.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to: 1) describe the travel motivations of the types of film tourists proposed by Macionis (2004), specifically, serendipitous tourists, specific film tourists, and general film tourists, in visiting a film-induced tourist destination; and 2) empirically test the assumption that film tourism is incidental and neither the main nor the sole motivation of most tourists traveling to a film destination. A mixed method of quantitative and qualitative (a series of self-complete questionnaire surveys over a period of eleven months and a longitudinal study of interviews and participant observations over a period of four years) was used in the study. Out of 1852 samples, the numbers of specific film tourists (10.5%) and general film tourists (19.5%) are less than serendipitous tourists (70%). Though both business and leisure tourists can be specific film tourists, their number is very small. Furthermore, serendipitous tourists can be distributed into almost equal numbers, namely, "incidental serendipitous tourists," "disinterested serendipitous tourists," and "sightseeing serendipitous tourists." While successful films create destination awareness among all types of film tourists, an individual's favorite film, rather than a successful film, motivated most specific film tourists to take a pilgrimage film trip. This study also highlights the value of the mixed method, of a quantitative and qualitative approach, in explaining film tourism, in regards to unusual behavior of outliers. Whereas the quantitative design increases the generalization of the findings, the qualitative method provides better understanding of contradictory findings without having to eliminate outliers from analysis.

1. Introduction

Rational of the study

Tourism research has been criticized regarding the validity and reliability of using only one cross-sectional study to generalize management implications (Ryan, Page, & Roche, 2007), using irrelevant samples such as non-tourists, and undertaking a piece of specific research and cutting it into as many papers as possible (Page, 2005). While a quantitative approach ensures the

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generalization of the findings, it is difficult to explain the travel motivations of unusual cases. However, qualitative research is still regarded with skepticism, accused of a subjective nature and the absence of facts, even though clear detailing of data collection, sampling, analysis, and attention to unusual cases can increase its validity and reliability (Malterud, 2001; Mays & Pope, 2000). Hence, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research into one study as a mixed method provides better insights into a phenomenon (Forman, Creswell, Damschroder, Kowalski, & Krein, 2008; Jacobs, Kawanaka, & Stigler, 1999; Kajornboon, 2005; Malterud, 2001; Polit & Beck, 2010).

Mixed-method research is research in which the researcher collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative designs (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007) at some stage of the research process (Östlund, Kidd, Wengström, & Rowa-Dewar 2011). According to Fodness (1994), the quantitative and qualitative mixed method results in a comprehensive measurement in understanding tourist motivations. Accordingly, this study uses a mixed-method qualitative and quantitative design to investigate the travel motivations of film tourists in visiting a film-induced destination.

Research on the film tourist is still limited and leaves gaps requiring further research (Heitmann, 2010), and there is no consensus about the travel motivations of tourists visiting film destinations. One school of thought has concluded that film tourism is the sole and main travel motivation of most tourists visiting a film destination. Other scholars question the motivations and argue that film tourism is merely incidental tourist experience and call for supporting evidence to evaluate the success of films in motivating film tourism (Croy, 2011; Croy & Heitmann, 2011; Macionis, 2004; Macionis & Sparks, 2009; Young & Young, 2008).

Therefore, the objectives of this study are: 1) to describe the travel motivations of *actual tourists* by adopting the types of film tourists as proposed by Macionis (2004) – serendipitous tourists, specific film tourists, and general film tourists – in visiting a film-induced destination and 2) to empirically test the assumption of Macionis (2004) and Croy and Heitmann (2011) – that film tourism is merely incidental and neither the main nor the sole motivation of most tourists traveling to a film destination. The following sections present the literature review, hypotheses, and the research methodology of this study.

2. Literature review

2.1. Film tourism

Previous studies have used different terminologies to delineate "visits to sites where movies and dramas have been filmed," such as screen tourism (Connell & Meyer, 2009; Kim, 2010; Kim, Long, & Robinson, 2009; Kim & O'Connor, 2011), cinematic tourism (Karpovich, 2010), celebrity-induced tourism (Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008), television-induced tourism (Connell, 2005; Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998), media-induced tourism (Iwashita, 2003), movie-induced tourism (Im & Chon, 2008; Jewell & McKinnon, 2008; Kim & Richardson, 2003), film-motivated tourism (Karpovich, 2010), film-induced tourism (Beeton, 2005; Frost, 2010; Macionis & Sparks, 2009; Ward & O'Regan, 2009), and film tourism (Croy, 2011; Heitmann, 2010; Macionis and O'Connor 2011; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Kim, 2012).

While film tourism and film-induced tourism are used interchangeably, there is a distinction between them (Croy, 2011). Film tourism is defined as visitation to a site that is or has been used for or is associated with filming (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010), whereas film-induced tourism is tourism influenced by both television and cinema that attracts and motivates people to travel to a film location (Beeton, 2010; Croy, 2011). In other words, film-induced tourism does motivate visitation to and tourist activities at film locations (Croy & Heitmann, 2011), but film tourism is just an incidental tourist experience of tourists to film-shooting locations (Croy, 2011; Macionis & Sparks, 2009).

Previous studies (Beeton, 2005; Connell, 2012; Croy & Heitmann, 2011; Macionis, 2004; Macionis & Sparks, 2009) have demonstrated the scope of film tourism as visits to portrayed locations (real/substitute), tours of film studios, film theme parks, film premier attendance, award ceremonies, film festivals, celebrity spottings, places marketed through film locations, and organized tours of portrayed locations, as well as watching ongoing filming taking place.

2.2. Film tourist typology

Similar to varying definitions of film tourism, several researchers have found and categorized different types of film tourists based on different samples, such as film pilgrims (Riley & van Doren, 1992), film tourists (Couldry, 1998), "film and non-film tourists" (Young & Young, 2008), screen tourists (Kim et al., 2009), elite screen tourists (Connell & Meyer, 2009), and purposeful film tourist (Croy, 2011). Film tourists can be excursionists who are traveling to a film site as part of their itinerary during a day trip to other destinations (Mordue, 2009; Young & Young, 2008) or film pilgrims who take a pilgrimage film trip and those who are motivated by nostalgia and place identity as a result of a film (Jewell & McKinnon, 2008). This study adopts the film tourist typology as proposed by Macionis (2004).

Macionis (2004) has categorized film tourists into three types. First are serendipitous tourists who just happen to be at a destination portrayed in a film, as part of multiple purposes rather than a single purpose (Macionis, 2004; Macionis & Sparks, 2009). Second are general film tourists who are not specifically drawn to a place just because of a film but can relate to the film referent set (Macionis, 2004). Third, specific film tourists are those who actively seek out places seen in film and demand a deep film experience (Macionis, 2004).

Building on Macionis' (2004) film tourist typology, Connell and Meyer (2009) suggest another sub-category of specific film tourist, "elite tourists", whose sole travel purpose is to see film-related sites; these tourists were more likely to buy souvenirs and revisit the destination in the future. Connell and Meyer (2009) found that most tourists visiting the filming location of a children's TV show, *Balamory*, were specific film tourists. The success of the TV program has created a "must see" destination for families with young children (Connell, 2005). In such cases, young children play a major role in parents' travel decision making. Also, when the young children become parents they might revisit the destination to relive the nostalgia experienced from a film seen during their childhood (Connell & Meyer, 2009). These specific film tourists not only have a propensity to be repeat tourists but also generate tourist expenditure at the location, such as through souvenir shopping (Connell & Meyer, 2009).

Meanwhile, Croy and Heitmann (2011) classify film tourists based on the importance of films in influencing tourist decision into: serendipitous film tourists, incidental film tourists, casual film tourists, sightseeing film tourists and purposeful film tourists. Croy and Heitmann (2011) point out that the majority of film tourists are incidental, casual, or serendipitous; and even some on film tours may not be motivated by films at all. To illustrate, Croy and Buchman (2009) found that one-third of film tourists joining a half-to-full-day *Lord of the Ring* tour had never watched the film; but they were on the tour because of friends' recommendations, as a means to access the New Zealand High Country, and/or because