

How Movies Affect Movie Tourists' Activities, Experiences, And Perception In A Destination. A Case Study of Manhattan, New York

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Abstract:

For a long time, movie tourism has been studied and discussed among studies within tourism fields. Many researchers believed that movies can encourage more visits to a specific destination. Despite being a "push factor", movies have been also known for creating false perceptions which leads to miss understanding of a destination's culture. This can affect long-term development in tourism industry within the location of interest. This paper applied a qualitative research approach in form of semi-structured interview on a group of tourists coming to Manhattan (New York) to create a more in-depth conclusion on how movies affect tourists' perceptions, experiences, and activities within a destination. In conclusion, the paper found a strong connection between movies and tourists' activities, experiences and perception within Manhattan borough, yet these elements are different among individuals.

Keyword: *tourist's perceptions; film-based tourism; megacities tourism*

Introduction

The history of the movie industry started during the late Victorian era in 1895 with short black and white videos and no sound. Going through different evolution, movies today are not only advanced in technology but also have a bigger role in the world (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003). In terms of culture, the movie industry has become the "seventh art" that creates and preserves the heritage of different communities (Parkinson, 2002). In terms of economy, besides being a million industry itself, the movie also supports other industries such as tourism (Riley, Baker, and Van Doren, 1998).

This paper will explore the movie tourism industry by studying the effects of movies in inducing tourist motivations for travel and their experiences as well as their perception of the destination. The literature review explores and compares these elements through previous studies. A focus group interview with a group of movie tourists after their New York trip was performed to collect data for measuring. The result suggested that although movies have significant influences on tourists' motivations, experiences, and perceptions, a large city that is famous for different movies can cause conflicts among these elements.

Literature review

Movie tourism

The use of movie tourism has been noticed and studied in literature since the 1990s (Riley, Baker, and Van Doren, 1998). Urry (1990) explained movie tourism came from tourists' imagination about the places which they saw through non-tourist means such as TV, movie, literature, videos, and magazines. Movie tourism, however, in practice, had been adopted by entertainment companies to induce tourists to their theme parks such as Universal studio and Disneyworld-MGM (Riley, Baker and Van Doren, 1998). In marketing strategy, Destination Product Placement is described as using the image of the destination in movies to boost the tourism traffic toward that destination (Metcalf et al., 2018). Although there were debates on whether the effect of movies can be sustainable or should be considered a "hallmark event" for its limited duration of interest (Riley, Baker, and Van Doren, 1998), movie tourism has proven to have a much longer-term effect on the destination economically (Connell and Meyer, 2009). This paper uses the term "movie tourism" for its universal recognition as "motion pictures tourism", yet, the term does not downplay the significant role of TV shows and has the same meaning as "screen tourism" by Connell and Meyer (2009).

Movie tourist motivations

Different researches were constructed to understand tourist motivations for traveling to places shown by movies. Riley, Baker, and Van Doren (1998) claimed that using movie's "icons" can induce visitors to travel to these places. These icons are demonstrated under different forms such as content, an event, a person, a scene, or a theme within the movie that are extraordinary. The icon creates an attachment between viewers and the location where the icon was related and acts as a pull factor.

One successful example of this motivation is Frozen by Walt Disney. The movie has not only been encouraged more visitors to Disney Worlds, but it has also pushed the number of tourists coming to Norway using the Norwegian "icons" such as the scenery, imagery, and culture. In 2014, after the release of Frozen, the VisitNorway.com website's traffic tripled along with the increase of 150% in flight booking and 37% in hotel booking. It is believed to have a long-term positive impact since Innovative Norway and Disney's guided tours division had already been partnered and prepared in 2013 (Metcalf et al., 2018). The application of "icon" in the movie is so effective that sometimes the movie can still boost the visiting in one place but filmed in other places (Connell and Meyer, 2009) creating a sense of hyper-reality such as the TV sitcoms Friends set in New York but filmed in California (Torchin, 2002).

Push factor from tourists alone should also be considered as an important motivation. Beeton (2010) noticed that the tourists return to these places because they want to recall the experiences or emotions that they had with the movie and the location. Macionis (2004) identified three types of movie tourists based on different levels of interest in the movie that related to where they travel. These are "Serendipitous film tourist" who has no idea about the movie and accidentally visit the place related to movie tourism, "General Film tourist" who knows about the movie and the place they visit and participate in the movie tourism but movie tourism is not their essential purposes and the "Specific film tourist" who goes to the place primarily for its connection with the movies. Macionis and Spark (2006), concluded that most movie tourists are Serendipitous film tourists. This number is changing, however, according to Beeton (2010).

Movie tourist experiences

It is essential that location managing companies recognize the future potential of movie tourists and fully prepare for the movie tourist experiences during or even before the hype of the movie to achieve a sustainable gain (Croy, 2011). A study by Connell and Meyer (2009) found out that movie tourists who came to the Isle of Mull in Scotland from the Balamory series have a higher rate of expectation and dissatisfaction compared to the ones who visit the place who are less influenced by the series. The number of people who are willing to revisit the place is also higher among the less influenced group. However, these movie tourists are accounting for more than half of the coming tourists. This is because when these movie tourists arrived at the place, there are not enough activities that these tourists can do to feel intact with the series. Although the infrastructure has the colorful theme of Balamory, this seems like the only thing that reminds them of the series. As Connell and Meyer (2009) described, the dissatisfaction among these movie tourists came from the high expectation and low engagement with the destination. The local community and council were the ones to blame since they did not prepare for the appearance of movie tourists in the past as well as worried about the tourist's future behavior which led to no actions have been made to improve the situation.

New Zealand Government has proven that if the destination branding and movie tourist experience are wisely managed, movie tourism can become an effective source of income in the long-term development of tourism. Just two years after the first Lord of the Rings film was released, "New Zealand is Middle-Earth" has become the slogan of the country's tourism (Bunchmann 2010). With support from the government and commercial operators, New Zealand has been seen as the main movie tourism destination for Lord of the Rings fan with more than 50 tours operated from small businesses to luxury services (Carl, Kinson, and Smith, 2007). However, research has proven that the success story of New Zealand tourism does not only come from the heavy investment in marketing but also from the wisely use of tourist experiences in the natural scenery. Both

studies by Carl, Kindon, and Smith (2007) and Bunchmann (2010) showed that although sometimes the expectations of the movie tourists do not meet the reality of the sight the visit, it is the quality of the tours and the experiences that these visitors get from the trip that associated with their satisfaction. Although these studies did not show the revisiting number, it is proven that tourists who were more satisfied during the trip tend to come back in the future (Beeton, 2010).

Influences of movies on tourist's perceptions

There is also a connection between tourist perceptions of destination with their travel motivation and their tourism experiences. The earliest research on this topic is from Kim and Richardson (2003). The study found that the group of tourists who watched a movie about Vienna perceived the destination's image differently from those who did not and that the movie can form mental images that inspire tourists to visit the destination. Similarly, Bolan and Williams (2008) noted that the movie can insert the destination's image into tourists even before, during, and after their visit. The paper also suggests that Destination Management Organisations use the opportunity for future sustainable tourism development. However, Frost (2006) suggested that a destination image is an existing one, and the movie's role is to enhance, not create it. Another study from Shani et al. (2009) also supported the theory of Frost. Shani et al.'s study (2009) was constructed by making their study subjects watch a historic film about South America and then gathering their thoughts about the place. The study proved that even films with negative conspiracy can induce tourism in the destination. The studies from Frost (2006) and Shani et al (2009) received various criticisms from several researchers (Connell, 2012) because of their research limitations in movie genre (using only historical films) and research method. Another subject that should be mentioned is the familiarity in culture between movie tourists and destinations.

Several studies have proven that movies can affect tourist perceptions of other places, especially from other cultures. Warnick, Bojanic, and Siriangkul (2005) suggested that *The Beach's* content influenced how Western tourists think about the destination negatively and positively. However, the paper believed that the movie did not play any part in encouraging inbound tourism. Kim and Reijnders (2018) concluded otherwise through the example of Indian movies. They believed that Western tourists traveled to India mostly for what they saw in the Bollywood productions. These Indian movies, yet, are imitating the false cultural stereotypes toward the tourists that shaped their views on "Indianness" while traveling to India. Another similar example is how anime, a Japanese animation, built false Western tourists' perceptions of Japanese culture (Seaton and Beeton, 2016).

The stereotypical behaviors also work another way around. Iwashita's (2008) study on Japanese tourists coming to the UK found that television and movie are the main sources that encourage them to visit the country. Although the researchers learned that the sense of familiarity coming from Japanese tourist perceptions of the UK can support the country's tourism, inaccurate stereotypes came along with these images threatening the national identity. In the case of some other positive stereotypes by Asian tourists (especially Chinese) from movies such as France is a romantic place or Korea, America and Japan is good for shopping or Thailand are known for the beautiful and cultural sights, the ideas can be exploited to promote these nations' tourism industry (Wen et al., 2018).

Impacts of movie tourism

As mentioned before, movie tourism can act as an effective tool in boosting the economic status of the destination by enhancing the image of the destination, gaining tourist attention, and adding to the existing product portfolio (Connell and Meyer, 2009; Durmaz, Platt and Yigitcanlar, 2010) even with the unattractive places (Riley, Baker and Van Doren, 1998). However, there were also reports on negative impacts that movie tourism caused to destinations such as economic windfalls, local prices escalation (Riley, Baker and Van Doren, 1998), intolerance conflicts between the local community and movie tourists (Mordue, 2001, 2009), and environmental issues such as overdevelopment and pollution (Silver, 2007). Furthermore, although the missed

opportunity does not have a negative impact, it does cause disadvantages in future tourism development through previous tourism disappointment in the destination (Riley, Baker, and Van Doren, 1998).

New York tourism industry, Manhattan borough

In terms of tourism, New York is one of the world's top 5 tourist destinations (WTTC, 2018). In fact, González-Rivera (2018) cited that "if New York were a country, it would rank nineteenth globally in international overnight visitation, behind Poland and ahead of the Netherland". The tourism industry in New York City is also the sixth-largest industry in employment rate (NYC & Company, 2017). However, WTTC (2018) also noted that New York City's tourism, aside from its recognition as the world's top tourism city, the industry only accounts for around 3.5% of the city's GDP. Among five boroughs within New York City, Manhattan is the most densely populated place in terms of tourism (Office of the New York State Comptroller, 2016). Manhattan borough accommodates two-thirds of the city's hotels along with other main tourism infrastructures such as Central Park, Empire State Building, Broadway, and various famous Museums. Although there are efforts in supporting other boroughs within the city (NYC & Company, 2017), the term "New York, NY" on TripAdvisor's searches showed only the Manhattan borough's recommendations (Park, Yang, and Wang, 2019).

New York movie tourism's situation

New York has a long history of movie culture due to its diversity in culture and ethnicity. Almost all types of movies from Hollywood to avant-garde to pornography can be published in New York and the city is the birthplace of many cultural movements not only in the movie industry. There are also many popular movies related to the Manhattan area (Harberski, 2007). One could consider New York is a famous destination for movie tourism. However, there is little research about the New York movie tourism industry. The most famous paper is from Torchin (2002), which was more than a decade ago, and focused on the hyper-reality in the movie as well as movie tours in the industry. Understandably, New York City is a big tourism destination where other special tourism segments such as food, music, art, shopping, business, and MICE tourism also play a part in supporting the city's tourism industry. Yet, further researches on movie tourism in New York City are necessary. Through the understanding of the literature review, this research will focus on movie tourists' motivations, experiences, and perceptions in New York City.

Methodology

Through current knowledge of movie tourism as well as movie tourist, the research is aim to answer the topic question: How do movies influence movie tourists in their activities, experiences, and perceptions in the area of Manhattan, New York City. In terms of research philosophy, there are two main methods, positivism and interpretivism research (Galliers, 1990). Although the method of positivism has been widely used through natural science, there are debates on whether it is suitable for social research such as tourism because the finding results are different from the hypothesis (most of the time) (Veal, 2018: 39). Interpretivism, on the other hand, provides in-depth research through individual explanations of their behavior. Therefore, this research applies the Interpretivism method. This choice of research philosophy leads to an inductive research approach in which a new theory is drawn after the data analysis process. Since tourists are allowed to express their own opinions, more hypotheses can be generated from the collected data that help to add to current knowledge of movie tourism.

This research approach to data collection through a qualitative method by constructing a semi-structured focus group interview and participant observation. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies focus in generous detail on a small number of subjects rather than a large number of research subjects with limited information. According to Veal (2018: 278), qualitative research considers the researcher as "a research instrument" allowing people to freely illustrate their ideas. Although this method can be helpful by avoiding any strained framework from researchers, it can also take longer to analyze and the research can go off-topic if the researcher is not

experienced enough. Focus group interviews and participant observation methods were used to collect research data. The main purpose of using focus group interview in this research is that focus group interview gathers and compares different opinions among individuals which cause interaction, this creates a result that might not occur during a one-to-one interview since the research is not allowed to guide opinions during qualitative research (Veal, 2018). Participant observation is the best technique for gathering insiders' perspectives which also supports the focus group interview's data (Cole, 2005).

The data collection sample in this research is a group of 24 students from the University of Sunderland who participated in a field trip to the Manhattan borough in New York City. These students are female dominant (21 females and 3 males) and mostly from the UK (some in the EU and one in Asia). The trip lasted for 5 days and 5 nights during which the first 2 days and nights are guided tours and free activities for 3 days after. The tours were mostly focused on popular attractions that might or might not be related to movie tourism. However, the participants have options in choosing to join one movie bus tour while spending their free time. It is believed that almost all of the participants saw at least one movie about the destination and more than half were interested in movie tourism. Therefore, the group included every type of movie tourist described in the literature review (Movie tourist motivations section) by Macionis (2004). The interview was constructed 3 weeks after the trip with all 24 participants. The researcher, in the middle of a circle group, started asking each question and waiting for the responses until the received information is believed to be enough or there is no longer debate on the subject.

After collecting data from the interview, the recording tape is then transcribed and ready to be analyzed. The process of data analysis goes through 3 levels: Individual data analysis in which all the comments from individuals will be analyzed to form personal opinions, the analysis of all arguments within one topic, and the analysis of how people interact with each other (Harding, 2018). Because there was an observation, personal observation notes will also be added during the analysis of each level. After that, the discussion will be drawn by comparing the understanding of literature with the analysis to form new hypotheses.

Results and discussion

Individual data analysis

Although there were 24 participants in the focus group interview, the answer frequencies between individuals are completely different. The interview showed that there were participants who answer almost every question and there were participants who did not participate in the conversation. Despite there being no clear evidence connecting between participants' answer frequency and their interests in movie tourism in New York, individuals who gave more opinions not only showed great knowledge of movies within the area but also have high expectations. Two most outstanding individuals that answered more questions will be analyzed: P1 (participant 1) and P2 (participant 2). These two participants appeared to be in the same smaller group within the large group and they mostly agreed on different questions (this will be discussed further in the participant interaction part).

In the case of P1, her perceptions and experiences were mostly affected by the movies she watched. The first movies about New York she listed were "Sex and the city, Home Alone, Friends, Thirteen going on Thirty, 27 dresses" which reflected her later answers in expectations such as "high heels, nice coats" or "businessman with a briefcase" and "sky rise building". Although it should be noted that these figures P1 described are common in New York and the tour also included traveling in two "sky rise buildings" (One World Observatory and Radio City), P1 felt not as impressed and thought the movies she watched exaggerated New York's lives. P1 claimed that she went to an Applebee restaurant and ate a buffalo chicken sandwich because of the movies.

In terms of P2, the participant's point of view is somewhat similar to P1. P2 also believed that the movies she watched did not reflect the real New York City. However, what is different between these two individuals is that P1 unsatisfied with what she experienced in New York although her expectations were met.

P2's expectations were more extreme than P1 such as "I thought it could be a lot more gunfire". She was also disappointed for not see any mafia in Little Italy. After going through P2's answer, there is one detail that stood out P2 expectations of New York were little pieces from different movies. Sometimes these pieces opposed each other such as seeing "New York as an amazing place" and "gun crimes" at the same time. P2 also reported that she went to the rock in Central Park that appeared in Little Dicky movie.

Individual topic analysis

When analyzing the topic of participants' motivations, the research found that tourists' motivation in traveling to New York City should be separated from the motivation of the participant's actions when traveling in New York City. This is because most of the participants agreed that they did not travel to New York primarily for movie tourism. The observation during the trip also suggested that although these people have different interests, they spent less time doing things connected to movie tourism or just accidentally doing it. However, many participants claimed to do what they saw in movies. The movie also encouraged the participant to take the movie bus tour as well as visit different movie areas such as Chinatown, Wall Street, and Little Italy.

The satisfactions in participant experiences were although vary, when comparing the movie and the experiences, the majority of answers are New York was not as expected. Only a small number of people in the group thought the movies are quite representative of New York's life. There is a link between those who engaged more in movie tourism activities and their level of satisfaction. Iconic movie areas such as Chinatown, Wall Street, and Little Italy received the most criticism. The movie bus tour was described as "enjoyable but confusing". According to one answer, the tour introduced more than 30 movies within 2 hours which was not only a lack of focus but also disconnection.

There are differences in the perception of each participant on how New York should be. Their images of New York can be as normal as a "city with rich people" to as extreme as a city with "a lot of gun crimes". The topic of how the movie affects their perceptions was also discussed and they concluded that it depends on what movie about New York they watched before the trip. The participants also mention the tourism bubble that prevents them from seeing the real New York. Although many of them did not travel to New York mainly for movie tourism, the participant agreed that they wanted to come back again for movie tourism which they will focus on in one movie such as Sex and the city or Friends.

Participant Interaction analysis

Because the participants were allowed to choose their seats during the interview, these people seemed to pick their seats collectively which created smaller groups. During the interview, these small groups interacted mostly with each other and they also had common opinions on the same topic. At times, there were disagreements between members of the group but not as many times as the disagreement with the member of other groups. During the observation time in New York, these groups were already formed based on their matched interests. Besides the first 2 days which the large group had to go with each other, the rest of the trip was divided into these small groups. They visited similar places and did similar things. The process of grouping was self-constructed before the trip to group people with the same interests in movie tourism and certain movies.

Discussion

After analyzing the interview data, the result was somewhat expected. However, there was also some new information that should be added to the understanding of movie tourism. Different figures could be considered movie "icons" (Riley, Baker, and Vandoren, 1998) such as Applebee, Cosmo, and Central Park. However, this finding showed that these icons should only be considered as minor motivations in tourist activities when they are already in the destination, not the main motivations to travel. New York is a megacity famous for different movies and many other industries which might decrease the impact of these movie icons. Three types of movie

tourists (Macionis 2004) also appeared in the research with different stages of movie tourism engagement. In the literature review, Connell and Meyer (2009) were describing how tourist expectation affects tourist satisfaction. This is even harder in the situation of New York City where different movies were filmed and many of them are blockbusters. Achieving a good level of satisfaction from movie tourists in New York is an uneasy process even with a high level of engagement since every movie tourist has their own perception of the place. Movie tourist perceptions studied in this paper also prove the influence of movies on destination image by Kim and Richardson (2003). Although the culture is not so different between the participant and host destination, the country's regulations in movies partly contributed to tourists' stereotypical perception of New York (gun control).

Conclusion and limitation

In conclusion, by reviewing previous studies and examples, the paper explored the knowledge of movie tourism as well as the influences of a movie on tourists' motivations, experiences, and perceptions. The paper then performed a case study research through a focus group interview, the collected data was analyzed through Harding's three-level model (2018) along with participant observation. The answers for the research's aims and objectives, which were drawn through comparing both findings from the literature and the interview, are: there is a strong connection between movies with tourists' motivation, experiences, and perceptions; these elements are different among tourists despite the same destination.

Some limitations appeared within the research. Firstly, even though New York is the fifth-largest city in terms of visits and a city of movie culture, there is not enough paper focused on the movie tourism industry in New York. This prevents the comparison process since the city's movie and tourism situation is different from other examples in terms of size and number. Secondly, although the outcome was random, the majority of participants in the research are female which can influence the result. Finally, although the focus group was the best choice in consideration, some issues such as people not participating in the conversation have somewhat lessened the interview quality. It is impossible to know if the person who did not contribute to the conversation is agree with the answers of others or disagrees but did not find the courage to express. It is recommended that future researches adjust these limitations by using a different method in researching this subject, more studies on movie tourism's behaviors in megacities should also be studied, and future studies should also study movie tourists separately through their gender for a better understanding.

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