

# Film-induced Tourism: Dubrovnik Study

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## **Film-induced Tourism: Dubrovnik Study**

### *Introduction*

This research topic is intended to take a closer look at the growing segment of travel industry, tourists that undertake trips simply by being exposed to movies and TV-shows. As we are witnessing lately, the film-induced travel industry is impacting Dubrovnik too. Among the visitors, more and more of them are motivated to visit by films that are being screened in movie theaters or presented on TV networks worldwide (Tkalec et al., 2017). In 2018, Croatia was named the “world’s best” destination by Chinese government (HINA, TCN, 2018), while at the same time Croatia already accommodates many tourists each month. Tourism is much more than “money changing hands”: only if all of the following stakeholders cooperate to a certain level will the model be sustainable: private and public investors, policy-makers, governmental organizations, destination management organizations (DMO’s), local residents, and even the visitors (Beeton, 2005, p.43).

Croatian Ministry of Tourism defines a tourist as any person who stays overnight in commercial accommodation outside of their residence (Croatia, Ministry, 2016). 15.5 million persons, both Croatian and foreign, accounted for 78 million “overnights” in 2016, a 10% increase from 2015. In both of these years, an average tourist stayed in Croatia for exactly 5 nights. When comparing months of a year, tourists stay for 2 to 3 nights longer during the highest season of three summer months, thus improving an average stay of up to 3 nights and less during the low-season. Nine out of ten tourists in 2016 were foreign (13.8 million versus 1.7 million Croatian). Croatia is a popular destination in the following countries: South Korea (three times more “overnights” than the Japanese in 2016), China (currently the government’s favorite), Germany (the most numerous nationality of tourists in Croatia), United States,

United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, and all of the neighboring countries, including Italy and Austria (no land borders shared with either).

### *Film tourism*

Film tourism is also known as “movie tourism” in North American media, or even more appropriately “screen tourism” in order to avoid the interchangeability of the two words, as well as account for other forms of moving images. Meyler and Connell (2009) call the term “movie/film” tourism an “understatement” due to emergence of feature-length TV shows, as well as location-specific gastronomy, important political speeches or religious gatherings, Olympic ceremonies, sporting events and more. Film-induced tourism, the principal aspect of this study, can be viewed from perspective of the pop-culture tourism and a subset of cultural tourism, in the same way people went on literary travels in the past to visit landscapes which were described in books. Advantage of film tourism was recognized very early in the research process: Hudson and Ritchie (2005) point out that a destination’s screen-time is a much more effective promotional tool than the specifically targeted marketing promotions implemented by governments. Movies and shows are given primetime TV slots, and spectators find the visual representation of a destination more believable than a marketing campaign. This gave rise to a phenomenon of *dedicated* film tourists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Macionis & O’Connor, 2011). Tourists whose primary motivation wasn’t a visit to a movie set, but they found themselves at the remains of one, are called *incidental* film tourists. On a similar note, if they stumbled upon a movie being shot right there and then, they are called *accidental* film tourists.

Movies are seen by millions of people of diverse ethnic, age, sex groups, nationalities, preferences, etc. Buchmann et al. (2010) state that a visitor who interacts with places that he had seen before on a screen is more likely to be satisfied with visit overall. O’Connor (2010)

and Roesch (2009) indicate that a film-induced tourist is usually informed about the destination they are visiting. They have already seen hours of footage on the screen which, combined with personal investment with the storyline, forms an opinion on the destination. Kim (2012) states that emotional and behavioral involvements are two driving factors behind forming lasting experiences while tourist is at the filming destination, but that cognitive immersion (e.g. learning from a guide) is not, perhaps because they found it tedious and a presence of an authority figure unnecessary. One has to wonder how government plans to bridge conservation efforts, such as limiting the number of entrants to Dubrovnik's City Walls, with maintaining the high revenues on that very spot.

Film tourism occurs in at least three phases, meaning that the full consequences of having a movie shot in a location are felt in years following the final cut (Oxford Economics, 2012). The three phases according to this source are as follows. *Direct impact* of a movie refers to pre-production, production, and post-production phases of the movie when the actual filming is taking place and filming location fees are being paid. The *indirect impact* is the total of jobs created for locals solely because of the movie, as well as anything that generates the revenues for the locals during the shooting of a movie. This includes accommodating the filmmaking crew in hotels or private ventures, having them to eat out in restaurants, etc. Finally, the third phase would be described as an induced impact that includes "*spillovers*" from shooting a movie in a location, including tourists' visits in the future only because of the movie, merchandise related to movie being sold, but serious cultural promotion and related trade, too. As discussed in a study of film tourism in the same area by Tkalec (2017), for example a visit to Split or Zagreb during a "Game of Thrones" tour constitutes spillover.

### *Academic background*

The interest for this topic was developed over a period of time. We are observing a rise of filmmaking activities in Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik as a filming location in turn attracts a number of tourists visiting the city as a result of hosting blockbuster movies and TV shows such as: “Star Wars”, “Game of Thrones”, “Robin Hood”, “Mamma Mia”, and in the future “James Bond”. Hundreds of film crew members, movie stars are consuming services while working on their new movie projects. Yet for a destination, the real value arises from the perspective of films promoting the city to a global audience that creates opportunities for Dubrovnik to represent itself as an extremely culture-rich destination offering much more than sun and sea, and this aspect will be a primary focus of this research. This could result in a shift of an average tourist profile, less exertion on national resources, and ability to spend elsewhere instead of marketing in the world. Awareness of tourists about this relatively new phenomenon for Croatia will be explored.

It is estimated that “The Fellowship of the Ring” can be translated as \$43 million in marketing expenses. As stated in Pritchard et al. (2002) and seen soon after in New Zealand, advertisement of a country inside the motion picture is the “ultimate of product placement”. But recent academic publications seem to discredit this: Li et al. (2017) claim that the good sides of millions coming to a place because of a movie’s worldwide fame are exaggerated and lacking in academic sources. Governments may wish to look good in the public because they are increasingly becoming active in filmmaking industry through marketing efforts. Also, some of the economic benefits are lost on the host soon after the filming has ended. Initial conservation efforts are negated by traffic and pedestrian congestion, increased strain on the natural resources, as well as lasting increase of prices and labor cost. Hao and Ryan (2013) indicate that screening a destination only benefits a previously unknown destination in long-

term and not the already established ones. The crucial question is whether Dubrovnik is recognized among travelers as a film-induced destination?

Governmental organizations are actively promoting a destination in other countries in order for them to bring filming staff and equipment along. This trend started in 1990s, around the same time film tourism industry became a frequently researched topic in literature. Swiss government is competing alongside Scottish to redirect Indian filmmakers from traditional locations of Hong Kong and Singapore (Connell, 2012). Other prominent examples include Visit Britain and Visit America Alliance. Britain has also enacted Film Tax Relief in 2007, indicating that the governments of the Western world are treating film industry as a steady, taxable, source of income.

Destination marketing organizations “encourage the film-making community to use specific geographic areas for on-location sets, bringing with them not just the benefits of tourists enthralled by a particular film's cinematographic qualities but also the economic spin-off from the production process.” (Connell, 2012) This can also include the so-called “substitute location”, where the plot is happening in one land, but shot in a different place. This usually occurs for cost-cutting reasons, as well as increased historic authenticity. Examples include south of Spain “acting” as the Wild West during the spaghetti western era, Thailand as locations of Vietnam War, but also spots on Earth depicting epic alien worlds (New Zealand in the “Lord of the Rings”, Dubrovnik in the “Game of Thrones” as a legendary place where main characters resolved major disputes).

Tourists are naturally a diverse group of people. They travel for personal reasons like personal connection with the film's or series' storyline, novelty, fantasy, prestige and more (Macionnis & O'Connor, 2011). Escapism is human desire to avoid boredom or displeasure with day-to-day life by immersing into culture, a feeling easily attainable by watching “blockbusters”, the

expensively produced films and feature-length TV-shows (AP, 2016). Appearance of Spielberg's epic fantasies in 1970's – "The Jaws", "Close Encounters of the Third Kind", "Raiders of the Lost Ark", "E.T." – started the modern film tourism industry. "Desiring a personal connection with the film's storyline may lead to inappropriate or intrusive behaviors if not managed by tourism operators" (Macionis & O'Connor, 2011). This can result in destruction of breathtaking spots like the beach from "The Beach" (2000) and potentially Dubrovnik, the zero-category UNESCO monument dating from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium. As concluded by Tkalec (2017) and Beeton (2005), collaboration between socioeconomic, environmental and demographic stakeholders is necessary for any location to be a tourism destination, especially the one in film industry niche.

### *Methodology*

The research was approached from the quantitative standpoint with the intention of explaining Dubrovnik's popularity as a destination in global terms, and investigating variables that are influencing this worldwide phenomenon among visitors. Quantitative research allows for generalizations about the population based on numerical representations of their opinions, attitudes and trends prevailing among them (Creswell et al., 2007). The survey was conducted by administering questionnaires to the sample. The choice of a group administered questionnaire was motivated by several reasons documented in the literature: easy and cheap distribution and creation, possibility of multiple types of questions, quick turnaround and option of creating unique design (Trochim, 2006).

### *Questionnaire*

A survey was conducted among 100 random tourists who visited a tourist office in Dubrovnik's Old Town. As per Trochim (2002), unbiased distribution of questionnaires to the sample allows for "drawing statistical inferences" about the entire visiting population. The

questionnaire was designed to answer if Dubrovnik is recognized as an on-screen destination. Blaha's version (2012) of Wang's questionnaire (2007) was tailored to meet the needs of Dubrovnik's film-induced tourism case study. It consists of ten questions which are divided into four sub-groups: first two sets investigate the tourists' traveling and movie-watching habits, the third looks into the knowledge on film-induced tourism, and the last four questions estimate the awareness of movies and shows featuring Dubrovnik. All questions are closed-ended. Even though all of the answers to questions are exhaustive and mutually exclusive, the "Other" section appears in two questions, in the unlikely case that an appropriate option hadn't been provided. Respondents can also name the destination in case they actively participated in the movie-induced tourism beforehand. This option would indicate that this Dubrovnik trend is deserving of closer scrutiny from all stakeholders.

The first question examined the frequency of travel. The second question examined the length of previous travel, with the view of comparing it to average lengths of stay across Croatia in the years of 2015 and 2016. Next two questions investigated the respondents' history of watching movies. Firstly, the respondents were asked to gauge the amount of movies watched per week. Secondly, they chose the favorite genres of movies and feature-length television shows. This tested Roesch's (2009) hypothesis that a film-induced tourist becomes one usually after indulging in either fictional or romantic movies. Two direct questions on film-induced tourism followed, out of which the percentages of tourists interested in this type of activity were determined. These results can be of use to national ministry of tourism at the very least, given that 78 million of "nights" were consumed by tourists in 2016, a 10% increase from the year before (Croatia, Ministry, 2016). In addition, respondents were asked if they were interested in a sanctioned visit to a location (e.g. a movie tour) in order to test the earlier hypotheses on cognitive and emotional immersions respectively.

### *Respondents*



Demographic variables of the research are listed at the questionnaire's very end. Respondents were asked to indicate their age, nationality, occupation and home country. These findings were compared to statistics for years 2015 and 2016, in which the most numerous tourists were Germans, followed by countries neighboring Croatia, as well as regional powerhouses of Austria and Italy (Croatia, Ministry, 2016). Somewhat surprisingly, only three respondents were German alongside single Austrian. Dominant nationality among respondents were citizens of United States (18), followed by the only remaining double-digit ethnic group, the Britons.

58 respondents were male, and 42 were female. A third of respondents were in the age group of 18 to 24 years old, and a fellow third were in the age group of 25 to 44 years old. Twenty respondents were aged 45 to 64, and eleven were 65 or older. The most common occupation was finances, with 32 respondents being either self-employed as business owners and managers, or otherwise working in respective sales departments, audit departments, banking, customer services and other day-to-day business operations (accounting, stock, etc.). 11 respondents work in science and other natural disciplines. 10 respondents were students. 11 respondents were retired and 3 unemployed.

In order to attain unbiased results, respondents were approached in distinct locations: the airport, the Gate of Pile, the souvenir shop co-owned by the author in the Old Town, the agency owned solely by the author in the Old Town, as well as randomly on the streets of Dubrovnik. No conclusions were drawn based on locations where respondents provided their answers; rather it was assumed they would have provided the same answers regardless of the location from where results were obtained.

### *Results*

The first question looked into the amount of travels conducted during the past year. Somewhat counter-intuitively, 7 respondents opted for none. These are the expatriates who have been living in Dubrovnik for at least a year. Two thirds of respondents indicated they traveled no more than three times, and roughly a third have traveled four or more times outside of their country of residence.

Two thirds of travelers indicated that the principal reasoning behind their travels was leisure. Business, work, or study – also describable as professional enhancement unlike the private enrichment – instigated nine travels. A single respondent, secretary from the United Kingdom, combined the two aforementioned motivations. Roughly a quarter (23) respondents indicated they traveled to visit family and friends.

Six respondents indicated they watched no movies in the duration of a week. This finding implies they rarely watch movies, if at all. Vast majority of respondents, 71 of them, watch up to three movies in a week. 20 respondents estimated they watched between four and six movies in the space of a week, while 3 of them average a movie a day.

Sixteen fellow respondents indicated they liked watching historical movies. Horror movies were the pick of exactly one quarter of respondents, followed by science fiction which is enjoyed by 27 of them. 43 respondents enjoy watching dramas, and 60 like action movies.

Somewhat surprisingly, 64 respondents were familiar with film-induced tourism, yet only 11 traveled to a destination solely because of its screen time. The discrepancy between familiarity with the topic and actual film-induced travels may stem out of fear that they would seem less authoritative on subsequent questions. However, this was the only question that tested the respondents' knowledge to any extent. Perhaps this question should have been placed more towards the end to yield more honest answers.

All in all, the respondents who went on film-induced travels visited the United States (Hollywood, Hawaii and San Francisco), Cuba, United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, and, most importantly to our study, a Korean male banker and Russian male business owner chose Croatia as their film-induced motivator to travel.

The following three questions examine movies and shows specific to Dubrovnik because they were shot in the city and immediate region: “Star Wars”, “Robin Hood”, “Game of Thrones” and “Mamma Mia”. The first question investigates whether the respondents ever saw any of the four. The second question is looking to establish if the respondents developed the liking for any of the aforementioned movies and shows, i.e. whether they are fans or not. Lastly, they were asked if they would be interested in signing up for a tour on any of the four screenings. The answers were very much uniform. At least one part of the “Star Wars” was seen by 47 respondents; two of them don’t think of themselves as fans nor would they be interested in touring a theme park. “Robin Hood” was seen by the least number of respondents, 23: all of them consider themselves fans, yet one respondent wouldn’t be interested in visiting a thematic park. “Game of Thrones” is the most popular show, seen by 65 respondents. All of them consider themselves fans of the show, and a single respondent wouldn’t go touring. “Mamma Mia” was seen by a quarter of respondents, and all of them are fans who would be interested in participating in a tour on the movie.

### *Discussion*

One probable shortcoming of the questionnaire lies in the fourth question: one respondent, an information technology male employee from the United States, indicated on the side of the question that he liked watching cartoons, an option completely left out of the questionnaire. In addition, an unemployed American female stated on the side that she liked watching documentaries. She could, however, simply have ticked “History”. Documentary and feature

films aren't the same by any stretch of imagination, but they do share historic authenticity to a similar and comparable extent.

Only two respondents have arrived to Dubrovnik in order to visit filming locations, a largely underwhelming figure. Both of them are fans of the "Game of Thrones". What's more, eight out of nine other film-induced travelers, who traveled across locations as diverse as Hawaii, Ireland and New Zealand, consider themselves fans of the series. Since the "Game of Thrones" will be filmed in Dubrovnik in years to come as well, future studies on the topic should perhaps investigate whether this series in particular was a principal motivator of traveling to the Town. In the future, the effects of screening movies and series in Dubrovnik may be felt more as their respective audiences increase, thus increasing the number of film-induced visitors. This especially holds true for the thirteen Far Eastern guests in the study: two of them have never seen any of four movies and shows, and the "Game of Thrones" is the only significantly favored screening. All in all, despite being aware of film-induced tourism, very few tourists arrive to Dubrovnik with the intention of visiting movie locations. The aim of the study was reached, regardless of limited time to conduct the study and a relatively small sample: Dubrovnik is not considered a movie location yet.

The situation is reminiscent of Venice, Italy where "The Italian Job", "James Bond: Casino Royale", "The Talented Mr. Ripley" and many more were shot, but rarely anyone has arrived because of the aforementioned – tourists come to Venice because of its historical value for which movies are irrelevant. Having all this in mind, Dubrovnik local council should be wary of branding or marketing itself as a movie destination when so few arrive for this reason.

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Dear Madam/Sir,

This survey is conducted to support my senior project which is researching the awareness of Dubrovnik as a filming location and film tourism as a motive for travel. The survey is completely anonymous and all collected data will be used for academic purposes solely. Thank you in advance for your support and time.

Sincerely,  
Davor Pištalo

**1. How many trips (more than 1-day) did you undertake in past 12 months?**

- None             1—3             4 or more

**2. What was the main reason behind the travels?**

- Leisure/Holiday    Business/Work/Studies    Visiting family or friends  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**3. How many movies do you watch per week?**

- 0             1—3             4—6             7 or more

**4. Which genre do you prefer? (Check all that apply.)**

- Action/Crime    Drama/Romance    Fantasy/Science fiction  
 Horror             Mystery/Thriller    Historical  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. And now about your attitude toward film-induced tourism – have you heard of it?**

- Yes             No

**6. Have you ever traveled to a destination only because it was featured in a movie?**

- Yes             No

If yes, please state the film and the place:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Lastly, on watching specific films. Have you ever seen the original or sequels/remakes of these movies? (Check all that apply.)**

- Star Wars             Robin Hood             Game of Thrones    Mamma Mia



**8. Do you consider yourself a fan of any of the following movies? (Check all that apply.)**

Star Wars       Robin Hood       Game of Thrones       Mamma Mia

**9. Would you be interested in doing a movie tour about these movies? (Check all that apply.)**

Star Wars       Robin Hood       Game of Thrones       Mamma Mia

**10. Are you aware that Dubrovnik was used a movie set for Star Wars, Game of Thrones and Robin Hood?**

Yes       No

**Your age?**

18—24       25—44       45—64       65+

**Gender?**

Male       Female

**Occupation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home country?** \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix

		Country			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Australia	6	6,0	6,0	6,0
	Austria	2	2,0	2,0	8,0
	Belgium	1	1,0	1,0	9,0
	Brazil	4	4,0	4,0	13,0
	Canada	4	4,0	4,0	17,0
	China	6	6,0	6,0	23,0
	Croatia	1	1,0	1,0	24,0
	Czech	1	1,0	1,0	25,0
	Denmark	1	1,0	1,0	26,0
	France	5	5,0	5,0	31,0
	Germany	3	3,0	3,0	34,0
	Hong Kong	2	2,0	2,0	36,0
	Hungary	2	2,0	2,0	38,0
	India	4	4,0	4,0	42,0
	Ireland	2	2,0	2,0	44,0
	Italy	4	4,0	4,0	48,0
	Korea	2	2,0	2,0	50,0
	Montenegro	1	1,0	1,0	51,0
	Norway	4	4,0	4,0	55,0
	Poland	3	3,0	3,0	58,0
	Puerto Rico	1	1,0	1,0	59,0
	Russia	5	5,0	5,0	64,0
	South Africa	4	4,0	4,0	68,0
	Spain	2	2,0	2,0	70,0
	UK	11	11,0	11,0	81,0
	Uruguay	1	1,0	1,0	82,0
USA	18	18,0	18,0	100,0	
Total	100	100,0	100,0		

**Star Wars**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Fans	53	53,0	53,0	53,0
Fans	47	47,0	47,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

**Robin Hood**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Fans	77	77,0	77,0	77,0
Fans	23	23,0	23,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

**Game of Thrones**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Fans	35	35,0	35,0	35,0
Fans	65	65,0	65,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

**Mamma Mia**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Fans	74	74,0	74,0	74,0
Fans	26	26,0	26,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

**18 to 24**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	66	66,0	66,0	66,0
Valid 1	34	34,0	34,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

**25 to 44**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	65	65,0	65,0	65,0
Valid 1	35	35,0	35,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

**45 to 64**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	80	80,0	80,0	80,0
Valid 1	20	20,0	20,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

**65+**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	89	89,0	89,0	89,0
Valid 1	11	11,0	11,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	