

Using films to promote cities through advanced location-based mobile experiences

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Abstract

Nowadays, there has been an increasing number of tourists visiting destinations featured through films and television series which are not directly related to DMOs' tourist promotion. This is a new form of tourism called film-induced tourism, one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry. Recent research suggests that films can have strong influence on tourist decision-making and films do not only provide short-term tourism revenue but long-term prosperity to the destination. This paper extends the film-induced concept to cities related to Film Festivals, evaluating the way new Information Technologies can enhance the experience of film lovers when visiting destinations such as Venice and San Sebastian.

Keywords: Film-induced tourism; Information Technology; tourist experience.

1 Introduction

Films or TV programmes have a great conscious or unconscious impact on the spectator, who recreates the scenarios of the movies or programmes in his/her imagination and wishes to travel to those locations. Thus, it can be clearly concluded that films influence tourism. This is a new form of tourism called film-induced tourism, one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry. Despite the growing interest of film-induced tourism, it has received little attention from researchers and practitioners. This paper describes an innovative approach to provide new experiences based on new Information and Communication Technologies to extend the film-induced concept to cities which organise well-known International Film Festivals. Tourists look forward to recognizing and recreating images of their film stars that have been broadcasted worldwide when at the city. This paper is

organized as follows. Section 2 describes the state of the art related to the new concept of film-induced tourism. The following section presents the CINeSPACE project, the framework in which this paper is based. The real evaluation of the experiences developed within the project in two cities is described in Section 4. Finally, some conclusions are withdrawn.

2 State of the art

The relationship between tourism and feature films is a relatively new field of academic study (Coulddry, 1998). Riley, Baker and Van Doren (1998) were the pioneers promoting the concept “movie-induced tourism” as a tool to assess the increase in the number of tourists in locations where films have been shot. After studying several famous films, they concluded that visits to the shooting environment increased between 40 and 50 per cent during the following four years after the film was on the cinema. Further definitions have been provided for film-induced tourism as “tourist visits to a destination or attraction as a result of the destination being feature on television, video or the cinema screen” (Busby & Klug, 2001).

Literature pertaining to the concept of film-induced tourist is scarce. Urry (1990), however, proposes that as an individual chooses to gaze upon a place, anticipation is sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as films, which construct and reinforce the gaze. Riley, Baker and Van Doren (1998) stated that the sight/site properties of a film location qualify as icons for tourists to gaze upon. Therefore, a film-induced tourist is defined as “a person who seeks a sight/site that is seen on the silver screen”. Moreover, Hottola (2002) states that popular films may have clear influence on tourism. They can impact extensively on a screened location not just during production but also after the film has been released (Busby and Klug, 2001).

To date, the influence of films on tourism has been evident at film sites globally mainly through referring to changes in the number of visitors following the release of a movie. Many film locations around the world become the pull factors for tourists to visit. One of the outstanding examples of the film-induced tourism phenomenon is New Zealand, with a huge increase in the number of tourists after the Lord of the Rings. Thus, the film is still used by all of the DMO of the country and the tour operators within their promotions and web sites. The increase in tourism incomes has been estimated as a 7% in 2001 and the tour operators increased their sales over 20% two weeks after the film was released. The tourist sector estimates that the trilogy has incremented the flux of visitors in more than a 30% in a stable way.

3 The CINeSPACE project

3.1 Description of the project

Nowadays, film-induced tourists have several needs that are not covered: lack of detailed information about film-related information (gossips, interviews, shooting details) or difficulties to communicate their own experiences to other people. Thus,

the CINESPACE project enables them to interact with location-based multimedia contents while wandering around a city (Santos et al, 2007).

Tourists register into the system in order to create their profile through the Web page of the city or at a kiosk in the tourism office (Figure 1). Once at the destination, they can collect the CINESPACE device, a small wireless binocular with a high definition screen situated near-the-eye, and audio phones. It includes several tracking sensors (GPS, compass, inertial) to determine the location and the point of view of the visitor.

Tourists start walking through the city while the system calculates their coordinates and displays them on a map, where the existing Points of Interest (PoI) are displayed. The system alerts users when they are within a reasonable distance of a PoI, so that they can navigate through the existing content. Based on the location and profile of the user, the system delivers multimedia content related to films that best fit his/her requirements. This digital content includes archive footage, audio clips, gossips, interviews and informal material about film stars, in very different formats (audio, video, text, images, photographs) and from distributed sources (film archives, City Councils, tourism organisations).



Fig. 1. Tourists in Saint Mark's Square.

Furthermore, the CINESPACE system provides the ability for tourists to create, annotate and store several types of content on-the-move, including images, audio and video. Users can instantly communicate with other users using this new technology by using the inbuilt camera. One of the key functionalities is peer-to-peer communication, so that tourists can chat with other friends that are simultaneously visiting the city. Moreover, visitors can send own-created images and videos to some of his/her friends.

3.2 Assessment of the approach

A deep evaluation campaign has been conducted in both cities. The valuation methodology was based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of the experience. Two types of questionnaires have been designed and used in the evaluation process: a

questionnaire for the evaluation of the experience; and a questionnaire for external observers.

In each city, a detailed plan for the trials was produced, including information related to the required equipment, distribution of the field trials and allocation of resources. Users were asked to provide feedback on the overall experience and make recommendations for future improvements. Data collected during the validation tests have been processed and analysed the technical performance of the system, usability aspects of the prototype and overall conformance to the requirements.

Most of the participants in both cities were satisfied or quite satisfied with the area selected for the trial, as the areas were considered the most proper location for the users. Regarding the contents and services, most of the users were satisfied with the content quantity and quality, although film lovers are obviously severe judges of the quality of material available for the field trial. Finally, almost all the participants considered the experience useful and would like to use the device again to discover the city in a more effective way. The whole sample stated that would use the device again, which demonstrates the great potential of such technologies for film-induced tourism experiences.

4 Conclusions

This research paper extends the film-induced concept to cities which organise well-known International Film Festivals. Tourists look forward to recognizing and recreating images of their film stars that have been broadcasted worldwide when at the city. Taking into account this impact, European cities with long tradition in the film sector such as Venice or San Sebastian have started including thematic guides with the preferences of the film stars during their visit to the city.

Moreover, this paper investigates the way new experiences based on Information Technologies can enhance the experience of film lovers to destinations related to films. The destinations involved are conscious about the need of innovative scenarios to become a tourist reference in Europe, where the target public will not only receive information in a passive way, but acquire, exchange or send the information from different sources and formats. The CINeSPACE system is a novel platform to create new ways of delivering, accessing and even creating information “on-the-move”, thus enhancing the accessibility of information and knowledge. It enables users to interact with location-based multimedia contents while wandering around a city. Based on the location and profile of the user, the system delivers multimedia content that best fits his/her requirements.

An extensive evaluation campaign was conducted in San Sebastian and Venice in July 2009. Most of the users found the device manageable and easy to begin the CINeSPACE experience without previous explanations. However, a little guidance can help users to familiarise better with the device and its functionalities. Although visitors were quite satisfied with the weight of the final prototype, participants

proposed a smaller and more compact device. In general, film-related tourists were more satisfied with the suitability of the device to discover the city in a more effective way. Nearly all of them would like to use the device again.

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