

Cultural or Film Tourism? An analysis comparing Hobbiton (New Zealand) and Daguanyuan (China).

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Abstract

The study compares two destinations associated with literature and films. These are Daguanyuan in Beijing, China, and Hobbiton in Matamata, New Zealand. Both have proven to be enduring tourist attractions. Both are based on popular novels, namely

Dream of the Red Mansions and The Lord of the Rings respectively. Both novels have attracted large audiences for television series or films. The question examined in the paper is whether, while both sites reflect different cultures, do they represent a form of tourism described in Asian academic literature as “contents tourism”. The study finds similarities in the reasons given for visits by tourists, which gives credence to concepts of a cosmopolitan or global culture, but context is thought to be important. The study explores the notion of “contents tourism” but concludes that this may only apply to specific circumstances and to highly committed “fans” (as in Otaku pilgrimage), and there is not yet a need to abandon older notions of “film tourism”.

Key words: Contents tourism, film tourism, globalization, interpretation, culture.



Introduction

It has often been stated that tourism is the world's largest industry, but equally it might be said that tourism is a sub-set of the leisure industries. The links between tourism, leisure and recreation are strong. Consumption of leisure and tourism experiences are motivated by similar reasons – the wish for escape, relaxation, and to experience new things are common to both (Beard and Ragheb, 1983). Additionally, the emergent technologies of 5G (and beyond), hi-definition visuals, machine learning and artificial intelligence may offer future opportunities to experience travel while sitting at a physical home while the neural networks of our brain lead us to believe we occupy other spaces.

The fore-runners of such current and potential developments might be found “film tourism”. The links between the film industry, entertainment, and tourism are epitomized in theme parks such as the Universal Studios theme parks in the USA and China. The phenomenon of film, television and literary sites drawing tourists to them has been well studied (Sofia, 2014; Hoppen, et al., 2014; Rittichainuwat & Rattanaphinanchai, 2015; Beeton, 2010, 2016; Li, et al., 2017; Greg, 2018; Wen, et al., 2018; Kim & Kim, 2018a; Ono, et al., 2020). As Kim and Kim (2018) stated, “film tourism is one of the fastest growing niche tourism areas, and has received an increasing amount of attention from scholars in various academic disciplines over the last decade or so” (p.259). Academic studies of film tourism to date have mainly focused on destination marketing management (Pires & Ingram, 2013; Hoppen, Brown, & Fyall, 2014; Smateera, 2015; Volo & Irimias, 2016); destination choice (Wen. et al., 2018); destination image (Reijnders, et al., 2015; Yen & Croy, 2016; Fu, et al., 2016); tourists' motivations (Rittichainuwat & Rattanaphinanchai, 2015; Oviedo-Garcia, et al, et al., 2016); authenticity (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010); nostalgia (Reijnders, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2018b); economic impact (Li, et. al., 2017); celebrity worship (Yen & Croy, 2016); and place attachment (Wong & Lai, 2015). Nonetheless, commentators such as Reijnders et al., 2015) maintain the body of knowledge about this phenomenon remains highly fragmented (Reijnders, et al., 2015).

One gap that exists is the relationship between film tourism and the phenomenon of cultural and literary tourism, and such studies remain relatively few in number, especially with reference to China (Hao & Ryan, 2013). What is also of interest in a 3 world increasingly driven by common technologies is the

impact of cultural difference.

Is there an emergence of a common, global culture – what Urry (1995) termed the veneer of cosmopolitanism, or do the tourism and entertainment industries help to sustain differences, even while permitting them to become more open to other cultures? In this respect a comparison might be made with the growth of indigenous tourism. Such tourism enables minority cultures to be sustained by making them commercially successful, but equally commercialises a culture. This success provides an economic rationale for the retention of a minority culture; thereby sustaining a diversity of thought and perspectives despite the globalization induced by the aforementioned technologies.

This form of questioning was initiated by observing the success of sites of film tourism in very different settings, namely Hobbiton in Waikato, New Zealand, and Daguanyuan in Beijing, China. Both appeal to a fan base, and to the general sightseer. The question that came to mind is whether the different cultural context is of importance when attracting visitors? Equally, the question has importance when seeking to attract international visitors who are not necessarily familiar with the stories that gave birth to the attractions, and who are also unaware of the cultural context of those stories.

Alternatively, it might be argued that there is a commonality due to “a culture of tourism” whereby international travellers often gaze on subject matter of which they have little direct knowledge, but each visitor derives an enjoyment by incorporating what is seen into their own personal networks of knowledge.

McKercher and Prideaux (2014) would criticise the research question from an empiricist viewpoint because it does not identify specific causal variables and a dependent variable.

The question as cited above is generic in nature and not capable of immediate falsification, and the former author would state that this paper possesses a research topic and not a research question. However, research often commences with observation and speculation, and it is the conceptual question of what is meant by “contents” tourism that most motivates the authors. Consequently, so as not to distract from the development of a conceptual argument, much of the empirical findings are reported in a series of appendices, and this is deliberate as noted in the final section of this paper.



Literature review

In this review three forms of tourism are described, namely film tourism, literature-based tourism and contents tourism. However, the boundaries between each classification are porous and easily blend one into the other. Finally, this section ends by providing a rationale for the choice of the two sites as case studies of these forms of tourism.

Film tourism

Strielkowski (2017, p.1) notes that a film's popularity often translates into a motivation to visit the locations where filming took place or where the film was set. Travel motivated by films, television series and cinema screens have increased significantly in the last few decades (Yen & Croy, 2016; Beeton, 2010). During the past two decades, there have been many studies focusing on film tourism (Beeton, 2016, 2010; Busby & Klug, 2001; Connell, 2012; Heitmann, 2010; Iwashita, 2003; Kim, 2010, 2012; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Macionis & Sparks, 2009; Yen & Croy, 2016; Zhang, Ryan & Cave, 2016; Zhang & Ryan, 2018). Numerous studies have acknowledged the importance and positive impact of film tourism on destinations. After the release of the first Harry Potter, the visitor numbers to Alnwick Castle, Northumberland, doubled in the period from 2001 to 2002 (Mintel, 2003, Sharpley, 2007). When comparing film tourism markets and destinations, Britain came fourth in a ranking of global destinations by both markets, on the grounds it was "an interesting and exciting place for contemporary culture such as music, films, art and literature" (VisitBritain, 2017, p.46).

Tourism has often proven to be agnostic to the truth of literature, history and location. One example is Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings (LOTR) film trilogy that also acted as a highly visible advertising and public relations catalyst for corporations such as Air New Zealand and New Zealand Telecom (Peaslee, 2011). Peaslee (2011, p.38) noted that the 2007 announcement that Jackson would be producing a multi-film adaptation of J. R. R. Tolkien's novel *The Hobbit*, the predecessor to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* epic, again highlighted "the intimate relationship between these texts and the locations required to realize them as visual material".

Literary tourism

O'Connor and Kim (2014) stated that literary tourism can be seen as the

forerunner of film tourism, and literature has a strong power to attract tourism to places associated with films, novels and writers, and the word “integrated” could be used to describe the relationship between literary tourism and film tourism. Certainly, film tourism has long been linked with works of literature and art (Beeton, 2015). Based on Butler’s (1986) typology of literary tourism, Busby and Klug (2001) added two further types, namely, “travel writing” and “film-induced literary tourism” (Hoppen, Brown & Fyall, 2014). According to Hoppen, Brown and Fyall (2014), film-induced literary tourism is derived from film-induced tourism, whereby a tourist’s motivation to read an author’s literary work is induced by first having seen the film adaptation of that work.

Busby and Klug (2001) note that many films and television series, being adaptations of literary works, would not have existed without those antecedent works. According to Beeton (2005), the effect film has on literary tourism is analogous to the effect the introduction of the Boeing 747 had on mainstream tourism. The range of literary-themed destinations increases with the popularity of film and television adaptations of literary works, encouraging more visitation, both actual and virtual (Gibson, 2006; Pennacchia, 2015; Macleod et al., 2018). As an example, a study of 36 popular films found that 42% were adaptations of much-loved novels such as Harry Potter, The Lord of Rings and the works of Jane Austen (Roesch, 2009). Here, the literary works can be seen as a souvenir which provides a permanent reminder of having seen the film (Busby, 2004, p.4). Iwashita (2006) also found that it was the literary precursors which were most likely to motivate tourists to visit film destinations, including sites related to the authors themselves. “Mediatised literary locations reach out to wider film audiences and can also enrich the experiences of the literary tourist” (Macleod et al., 2018).

Hence, in an earlier study, Eagle and Carnell (1977) wrote about the phenomenon where readers are induced to become literary pilgrims. Having become fascinated with locations associated with their favourite authors, readers are motivated to visit the locations where these authors were born or grew up, to see the surroundings that inspired their literary works, and to visit their graves or public memorials to pay their respects. For his part, Herbert (1997, 2001) suggests three reasons as to why sites associated with literature and authors have an appeal for tourists. First, there is an interest in the author and their works. Second, tourists may wish to visit to better understand a novel and deepen their attachment to beloved works. Third, the setting for a work of



fiction may be a physical location known to the writer, and so a merging of the imagined and actual location imbues that location with an intimate meaning for the literary tourist (Hebert, 2001). At the same time, Hoppen, Brown & Fyal (2014) identify a further relationship between film and the literary works and destinations upon which they were based, where the film adaptations rekindle interest in those works and destinations. Furthermore, such adaptations can even stimulate a general interest in literature for mass audiences.

Contents tourism

In the English-language literature, the study of tourism induced by popular culture has often been broken down by media format, so there is film-induced tourism, TV tourism, literature tourism and so on (Beeton, Yamamura, & Seaton, 2013, p.142). Within Japan, however, the buzzword in the Japanese academy, and the term adopted by the Japanese government in its official promotional strategies regarding film-induced tourism, is *kontentsu tsurizumu* (contents tourism) (Seaton & Yamamura, 2015). When considering reasons for the popularity of certain films and tourism sites associated with those films, we find that markers, signs and meanings play an important role, not only in establishing motives for the visitation but also in presenting the site to the tourist (Beeton, 2016).

While the term “contents tourism” is coming to represent tourism based around signs and meaning, within its original Japanese context, the term was originally used to analyse Japanese youth culture (Graburn & Yamamura, 2020). The concept of contents tourism emerged in the 1990s and was first officially adopted in the Japanese government’s tourism strategy in 2005 (Beeton, 2016; Graburn & Yamamura, 2020). In Japan, The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLITT) defined several forms of contents tourism and encouraged local authorities to develop content distinctiveness for their regions as tourist resources. For example, displays or exhibitions of the contents included establishing museums dedicated to a film or television series’ writers, featuring exhibits about the writers as well as exhibits of the sets and props used during production (Beeton, Yamamura, & Seaton, 2013).

Some scholars (Masubuchi, 2010; Yamamura, 2011, 2020; Beeton, Yamamura, & Seaton 2013; Seaton et al., 2017) have offered definitions of the term “contents tourism”. Seaton et al. (2017) define it as: “travel behavior

motivated fully or partially by narratives, characters, locations, and other creative elements of popular culture forms, including film, television dramas, manga, anime, novels, and computer games. (p.3)” Equally, Ryan (2002) notes that to regard tourism as a subset of leisure is not to lessen its role, as the subject matter of theatre and film ranges from escape, to comedy, laughter, pathos and insights into the human condition. Sites based on literature and associated with film retain the same capabilities to inspire thought, reflection, playfulness, escape and fun.

The two locations selected for this study comply with these observations. The two sites are Daguanyuan in Beijing, and Hobbiton near Matamata in New Zealand. The sites are described in more detail below. However, the primary reasons were their popularity and the different cultural traditions each represents. The works of literature on which they are based reflect and contribute to the culture of both nations and to the world, arguably even more so in these days of the “global village”. This wider perspective is now being recognized in academic research. Reference was made above to what was termed “film tourism” but films are but one form of visual media being accessed on smart-phones, laptops, and smart televisions. Terminology that emphasizes the medium is arguably misleading, even while one recognizes that “the medium is the message” (McCluhan, 1964, p.1). Current emphasis lies on the content and context of the message and thus Yamamura (2020) writes of creative fandom and Otsuka (2014) refers to mixed models that include anime and comic books.

The Locations

Locations and Content.

Inasmuch as “contents tourism” is about narratives, so the two novels that gave birth to the two tourist sites are also about narratives of national character (guomin xing). The Dream of the Red Mansions is a classic of 18th century Chinese literature located in the period of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) and written during a period of prosperity when China was amongst the foremost global powers. Yet, in retrospect, by the eighteenth century, China was commencing an economic and political decline as the European nations began commercial exploitation of Asia – just as the novel was also about the decline of the Jia aristocratic family. The book is interwoven with Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian teachings, and contains microscopic, detailed descriptions



of traditional Chinese manners, cuisine and gardening. At its heart lies a resignation to fate, combined with a story of deceit and forlorn love (Hawkes, 1973). In contrast, *The Lord of the Rings* was premised on Anglo-Saxon/Norse sagas, influenced by the Welsh language and in a nuanced text tells of ages of heroism, courage, brotherhood, and loyalty, and was primarily written during the Second World War when such virtues gave solace to an embattled nation (Reid, 2009; Kuipers & De Kloet, 2009; Kundu, 2014)*.

The initial purpose of the research was to study the motivations of visitors to the two sites as representing different cultural contexts. It was hypothesized that their literary traditions would be important to both groups of visitors, but would be of greater importance to the Chinese. It was also thought that the Chinese would have a greater familiarity with *The Dream of the Red Mansions*, but that *Hobbiton* would have a more generic appeal, and the concept of Middle Earth would contain more whimsy than the Qing palace of *Daguanyuan*. The next sections will provide more “content” by describing the locations. However, the more one looked at the findings and context, the more one noticed complexities emerging, as will be detailed in the discussion section of the paper.

Physical Contents

Grand View Gardens (Daguanyuan)

The physical Grand View Gardens has almost 40 years of history. In 1983, the China TV drama production centre chose to plan a location to produce a TV series named *The Dream of the Red Mansion*, based on Cao Xueqin’s classical novel of the same name. It was suggested that the producers follow foreign experience and make a “film set” that could become a tourism destination after the production had finished. After many government meetings and heeding experts’ advice, the location known as the South Vegetable Garden was chosen as the site for the film set. (The site is located in the northwest corner of Xicheng District, Beijing, China). During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the garden was used as a vegetable farm for the royal family (Beijing Grand View Garden, 2020). In 1983, the site featured no built structures of any note, meaning it was suitable green field site on which to construct Grand View Gardens based as described in the novel. Figure one shows a view of the garden before construction commenced. In 1984, a replica of the garden was built in strict accordance with the novel’s description, and construction

took over five years. This became the set for the first major television series adaptation of the novel, and is shown in Figure two.

Figures One and Two go about here

The Beijing District government suggested that all involved parties be faithful to the original novel, respect the experts, use real materials, and construct “real” scenery and buildings, and an opening ceremony was held in April of 1984. The government employed many experts on the history of the novel, known as “Redologists”, who included horticulturists, architects, archaeologists, folklorists, and historians. According to the description in the novel, the garden was built specially for the homecoming of the imperial concubine Jia Yuan-chun, the eldest daughter in the Jia family. According to the novel, the garden was well laid out and artistically designed according to the traditional Chinese art of gardening. It was filled with oriental pavilions, criss-crossed with flowers and plants, and was a delightful place for pleasure-seeking Chinese nobles. After her visit, Jia Yuan-chun recommended that her younger brothers and sisters live and study at the garden (Widmer & Chang, 1997).

The Garden covers an area of about 13 hectares within its enclosure, including 62,416 square meters of green area, 23,500 square meters of water area, and 23,896 square meters of building area (112 buildings with 873 rooms). The Garden contains more than 40 pavilions, Buddhist convents and a landscape of lakes and mountains matched with famous flowers and trees, and it is described as a fairyland in the city (Daguanyuan Administration, 2020). The main attractions include the Bamboo Lodge (潇湘馆) and the Happy Red Court (怡红院).

Grand View Garden successfully transferred the fictional world to a real, physical palace and garden, and all the architectural structures, landscape, plants, indoor furniture, and inscribed boards and cupolas are faithful to the original novel. The garden is classified as the first “Garden of a Literary Masterpiece” in China by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Daguanyuan has great significance for many, including Redologists, who dubbed it as another dream out of The Dream of the Red Mansion. Horticultural, literary and art circles have praised the Gardens for its combination of film with landscape architecture (Daguanyuan Administration, 2020) and the site is perceived as possessing a significant cultural and heritage status. The television series was



released over 36 episodes in 1988 and 1989 and proved to be a ‘hit’ despite television ownership being by today’s standards, comparatively limited. The music by Wang Liping remain highly recognizable and is very familiar to its Chinese audience. In 2010 a much anticipated later series was screened but met a much more critical reception as described below. Both the 1988 and 2010 films are today freely available on Youtube.com.

Hobbiton Movie Set

Hobbiton Movie Set, featured in Peter Jackson’s film trilogy “The Lord of Rings (LOTR)”, is located in Matamata, North Island, New Zealand (Hobbiton Movie Set, 2020). In September 1998, Peter Jackson discovered the Alexander farm while scouting locations, and he thought the farm was the best possible location to film those parts of “The Lord of the Rings” set in J. R. R. Tolkien’s fictional location called ‘The Shire’ (Our Story, 2020). The farm was a stunning 1,250-acre sheep farm in the heart of the Waikato, and the surrounding areas were untouched by power lines, buildings, or visible roads. The site could therefore leave the 20th century behind and meet the director’s needs regarding the fantasy world of “Middle-earth”. It took nine months for the construction since March 1999. In December 1999, filming commenced and continued for three months, and parts of “LOTR” involving The Shire were filmed on this farm (Our story, 2020). In 2009, Peter Jackson returned to film “The Hobbit Trilogy” at the site.

Guided tours to Hobbiton operate on a daily, and no private visits are allowed. Each of the daily LOTR tour takes about 2 hours and the guide will escort visitors through the ten-acre site, recounting details of how the Hobbiton Movie Set was created (Hobbiton Movie Set Tour, 2020). There are 11 key attractions at the location, such as Party Tree, Bag End (Bilbo and Frodo Baggin’s home), the Mill and so on. The guide will escort visitors around the site, showing the intricate detailing, pointing out the more famous locations and explaining how the “movie magic” was created to sustain the lesser heights of the hobbits.

Research methods

The research was based on a sequential mixed methods approach with the quantitative stage following the qualitative stage. Consequently, the authors have visited both sites many times, are familiar with them and some of the managerial staff. Such visits meant initially engaging with staff and visitors in

informal and subsequently more structured conversations based on open-ended questioning that led to the design of questionnaires. These were used for more structured data collection to explore tourists' attitudes and visit motivations. The initial conversations tended to centre on informants' past knowledge of the books and the films, and the great majority of the respondents had seen the films and many had also read the books. The conversations often extended to explore the degree to which the visit had confirmed the visitors' perceptions of the places in the original book, and the degree to which the site provided new insights or knowledge of the work. Interestingly, in terms of the concepts of "contents tourism" discussed below, little reference was made by respondents to membership of "fan blogs" or similar fan media, despite the fact that both exist for each novel.

A total of 250 effective questionnaires were conducted at The Shire's Rest Café after respondents returned from the Hobbiton Movie Set Tour, representing a completion rate of 81%. A seven-point scale was applied with "7" representing the highest level of agreement with the lead item. The items sought information about the visit being motivated by interest in the film, the landscape setting, recommendation received and were consistent with previous work conducted by Ma, Zhang and Ryan (2012). The survey at Hobbiton was the first of the two to be completed, and the survey at Daguanyuan used a different list of contextual site-oriented items but based on similar motives. The sample in the second case numbered 1140 respondents. In both cases a section of the questionnaire collected socio-demographic data. The Hobbiton sample is limited in its nature by being a convenience sample, and also more limited time as many respondents wished to return home on the completion of their tour. The Grand View Gardens is a purposeful sample designed to ensure that each socio-demographic group by age and gender was sufficiently large enough to permit comparisons, and the administration supported data collection, but did not interfere with the questioning nor interviewing. It should be noted that the site attracts many younger attendees who are studying the novel as part of their education at both school and tertiary levels. The sample was therefore skewed away from this younger under 25 years age group.

Results

The descriptive statistics and the results of a k-means cluster for each survey are briefly described below.



Hobbiton Results

The largest proportion of the total sample of respondents were younger, being aged between 17 and 30 years old (accounting for 48.3% of the total number of respondents).

Regarding the total number of respondents, the most common occupations were students (29.4%), managers (23.3%), and skilled manual workers (10.6%). Of the respondents, 36.7% had a bachelor's degree. The greater number had a self-recorded average annual household income (42.8%), followed by 27.8% of respondents with above average income. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents were international visitors, contributing 82.2% of the visitors (that includes the UK (22.2%), Australia (18.3%), Germany (10.6%), USA (8.9%), France (7.2%), Ireland (5%), and so on), with only 17.8% respondents being New Zealanders. Management subsequently confirmed this was representative of the general patterns of visitation prior to 2020.

The descriptive statistics indicated the importance of motives for visiting Hobbiton Movie Set. The highest level of agreement was on the item "I am interested in the natural scenery of Hobbiton" with a mean of 5.52 (std. =1.45); followed by the item "I saw the LOTR film trilogy" with a mean of 5.46 (std. =1.90). However, the lowest level of agreement was related to the item "I want to satisfy my children's LOTR interest" with a mean of 2.40 (std. =2.01), but few respondents had children. Furthermore, the item "This place was recommended to me by friends" also has a low mean of 3.57 (std =2.18). It was found that age, gender, and income were not distinguishing variables in explaining the motive to visit the site, implying that the appeal of the site was general in nature as far as socio-demographics are concerned. Given this, and assuming that psychographics might possess importance, a cluster analysis was undertaken with the results shown in Appendix One. Using a K-means cluster analysis four clusters of visitors were identified, entitled "'LOTR' Fans", "natural scenery of Hobbiton enthusiast", "Not Keen", and "'LOTR' interested visitors". The findings are consistent with Oviedo-Garcia, et al's (2016) research study examining tourists' visiting film tourism sites in Seville, Spain, which included "film site experiences, fantasy, novelty, touring the film and personal film-location connection" (p.713). Appendix one provided more details of their characteristics.

Daguanyuan Results

From the data, female and male participants accounted for 66.5% and 33.5%

respectively of the total sample. Nearly two-thirds of the sample were permanently resident in Northern China, and most belonged to a younger group (aged between 17 to 30 years old), with a high of level of education. Their occupations were mostly students, administrative personnel, and professional or managerial, and they preferred to visit the garden with their family or friends. The majority of visitors were familiar with the story of *The Dream of Red Mansions* as they had read Cao Xueqin's novel and watched the TV series. Based on the researchers' observations and conversations with the staff, tourists to the site can be generally divided into two main groups: (1) residents, who tend to be older; and (2) young people, who are almost invariably students. The sample concentrated on those guests who bought the entry tickets, and most of those buyers were young. The Garden is particularly attractive to young students. For example, the Garden is used by student couples as a quiet place to visit, and students majoring in Chinese literature who find it a valuable resource for their studies.

The results indicated that the highest mean of those potential motivators is "I am interested in seeing places that can inform me of antiquity" (mean=5.64, std=1.44), followed by the motivator "I like this mixture between storytelling and history" (mean=5.60, std=1.44), and the item "I am interested in the *Dream of Red Mansion*" (mean=5.28. std=1.54). These three items were related to the garden's classical culture, which draws upon the novel and its role and setting in Chinese classical literature.

According to the earlier literature, Macionis (2004) stated that tourists motivated by pull factors are related to a destination's unique features, attractions, and attributes.

Here, the classical and cultural garden with its *The Dream of Red Mansions* story can be seen as the destination's special features.

Using K-means cluster analysis, a four-cluster solution (see Appendix Two) seemed to be the most coherent and interpretable. Cluster one (entitled "Enthusiasts") comprised 343 respondents, cluster two (those liking to relax and enjoy the surroundings) comprised 214 informants, and clusters three (Low Scorers) and four (Interested in the 1987 television series) comprised 214 and 369 respondents respectively. In passing it needs to be noted that the original 1987 television series is still generally regarded as offering a better interpretation than the later 2010 series.

Cluster One (the "Enthusiasts") had a generally high score across the



suggested reasons for coming to Daguanyuan – scoring high in interest in the novel, seeing the 1987 TV series, seeing the location as being interesting, nice to visit, a “must see” attraction and a place presenting a mix of history and story-telling. The novel, its reputation and the two TV series of *The Dream of the Red Mansions* can be seen as an attractor, motivator, and part of the visit experience for tourists (Croy, 2011). Cluster three (n=214) had an opposite predisposition, tending to score low, while cluster three (also n=214) had seemingly low levels of interest in the novel, but were drawn to Daguanyuan by its physical attributes. Cluster four was primarily motivated by an interest generated by the 1980s TV series, which has remained the more popular of the two as noted below.

Discussion

Through the comparative analysis of the two studies, it was found that there were both similarities and dissimilarities. Both sites were constructed for the purposes of filming adaptations of famous novels, and the details of their construction were faithful to the descriptions given in those novels. Additionally, both sites are physical representations of fictional locations.

Both literary works had many fans before their TV and film adaptations were released. However, it has been found that while the films and TV series are one of the most important motives for visitors, they are not the sole reasons for site visitation. The most important motive for visiting Hobbiton is the “natural scenery”, followed by the LOTR film trilogy. Visitors were motivated and expected to see the beautiful natural scenery described in the novels and shown on the films, and which feature on websites and blogs. Similarly, for Grand View Garden, visitors were motivated to experience the cultural and historical atmosphere described in the novel and represented in the TV series. The iconic settings of *The Dream of Red Mansions* were the most important reasons for visitors to visit the Garden, but not the sole reason; both relaxation and sightseeing were also important to visitors.

However, dissimilarities existed. Daguanyuan can be enjoyed by visitors on different levels, whereas at Hobbiton, visitors are paying to experience Tolkien’s fictional “The Shire” and recognize the features depicted in the films. Daguanyuan, on the one hand, is also open to many local residents who use the site as a recreational place for relaxing, playing musical instruments,

exercising with Tai Chi, meeting friends, and doing physical exercises. (Zhang, Ryan, & Cave, 2016). On the other hand, the Garden is also a cultural and historical destination, and tourists can learn about Chinese classical culture from the site. Further, both residents and tourists felt that “the Garden represents a special aspect of Chinese classical culture that should be inherited by future generations” (Zhang & Ryan, 2018, p.15). The Dream of the Red Mansions is a quintessentially Chinese story, and the Grand View Garden is a physical representation classical Chinese culture. Thus, Chinese domestic visitors to the Garden account for a much higher percentage of visitors as relatively few foreign visitors are familiar with the novel on which it is based.

The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings trilogy are about a fictional world that is Norse/Anglo-Saxon/English in origin, and the books are comparable to the Harry Potter series or the Narnia novels of C. S. Lewis. All are popular in western culture, but have achieved international recognition. The New Zealand connection with LOTR comes from the work of the New Zealand film producer, Peter Jackson, his Wellington based special effects studio in Wellington, and the successful promotion of New Zealand as “Middle Earth” by national and regional tourism authorities in New Zealand.

In the introduction to *Mediating the Tourist Experience*, Scarles and Lester (2013, p.1) write that in age of cyber-tourism and manipulated images, the mediation of images can be understood as “a series of nonlinear, dynamic and immanent practices and processes as both producers and consumers come together to negotiate the purposive and performative enactments and experiences of the tourist experience”. In the same book, Beeton, Yamamura and Seaton (2013) consider the influence of South Korean pop culture, its hallyu (Korean Wave) and tourism, and the success of Japan’s Tiaga dramas in generating tourism flows and hence imply that such examples are representative of “mediation of tourism experiences”, or as Beeton, Yamamura and Seaton (2013), term it – “contents tourism” (Scarles & Lester, 2013). Do the examples of Hobbiton and Daguanyuan substantiate such arguments, or alternatively is the terminology of image mediation and contents tourism simply a change of nomenclature for previously well studied tourist behaviours and images?

Certainly, film tourism has been a well-established niche in academic research since the pioneering work of Riley, Baker and Van Duren (1989) who examined the tourism implications of films such as *The Field of Dreams* that attracted several tens of thousands of tourists to a corn field in Iowa. Commentators



quickly realised that the visitor engaged in acts of imputing meaning to such a site – imputations that had much to do with a fantasy of a farmer’s field and in its references to the American love of baseball. A corn field is a corn field, but the corn field of the Lansing family homestead as the site of the fictional Kinsella farm had meaning due to film imagery. An imagery that resonated with an American public.

The visitor was, at the least, a co-creator of the tourist experience through several mental actions. The site had importance through a film that entertained, but which in its entertainment spoke about American values – and a film which in 2017 was inaugurated in US National Film Registry as being “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant” (Library of Congress, 2017). The evidence generated from visitors to Hobbiton and Daguanyuan suggests for the majority of the visitors the level of interest in the literary tradition and the filmic representation is an important motive for visitation. Several visitors anticipate gaining insights into the novels, the key characters, and the content of the books. In short, aided by the deliberate construction of both Hobbiton and Daguanyuan to comply with an image shaped by filmic visualisation, a trilogy of an imaged place derived from a fiction and familiarity and mental images given meaning by the visitors’ own expectations and imagined place, these sites “pull” the visitor to successfully meet their motives to experience the fiction made real (Dann, 1977, Iso-Ahola, 1982).

As Riley, Baker and Van Duren (1998, p.924) noted about films and tourism, the primary purpose of a film is not to attract tourists to a destination, but what happens is that for various reasons a film may become iconic, and “Icons, abstract or tangible, become the focal point for visitation and the associated location is tangible evidence of the icon” (p.924). The stories of Hobbiton and Daguanyuan possess the intangible quality of being iconic, but the iconic is made tangible by the materialisation of fictional locations made real – one can see, touch and feel the places that successfully recreate the ambience of “The Shire” or a Qing Dynasty Palace and Gardens. Both sites reinforce the notion by special events – Hobbiton holds special events when people re-enact roles as hobbits, and Daguanyuan has its Temple Fairs when scenes from the book and film are re-enacted complete with firework displays (other than in early 2020-22 due to Covid -19).

The results reported above note that, for the majority of visitors, the sites are places of story-telling made visual and real, and they reconfirm acts of

imagination – they are representations of places as envisaged by the tourist. By its very nature tourism requires a context, and thus contents. It is a physical place occupied by people, events and happenings to which tourists give meaning that shapes expectations of future trips and memories of past trips. However, disappointment is noted when the site fails to meet the expectation formed from the individual's reading of the book, or viewing of the film. In that sense the book or film mediates the experience of the site, and confirmation or disconfirmation arises from the evaluation of the site by reference to the initial written or visual text? One can ask – was the visitor's reading of the text or viewing of the film complete or deficient, and to what extent was pleasure derived from the encounter with the written word or visual image, but these meanings misled as to the physical sites? The issue here is one of relativities? If the visitor and those designing the site possess a common perspective then the visitor's views are confirmed. If there is dis-congruity of views, does disconfirmation create disappointment – or does the visitor feel superior to the site designer? In each case the experience of novel or film mediates meaning derived from the visit. Beeton, Yamamura and Seaton (2013) argue that the presence of the internet collapses the production of the experience. They write “Yet, just as the Internet has collapsed distinctions between the ‘producer and consumer’, so too it has collapsed the distinction between ‘media’ and ‘tourist sites’ by unifying the act of consuming media products with the act of visiting (web)sites” (p.149). Additionally, they continue to note the phenomenon that when virtual communities converge on the site to become actual communities, so “the multifaceted role of the internet in connecting the ‘film’ and the ‘tourism’ elements of ‘film-induced tourism’, constitute the very essence of the contents tourism literature (Beeton, Yamamura & Seaton, 2013, p.149).

It is suggested that the research at Hobbiton and Daguanyuan does not wholly substantiate such arguments, and the leap from film-induced tourism to “contents tourism” is dependent upon the role of the internet and intensity of fandom. As Scherle and Lessmeister (2013) point out, despite talk of social media, “it is perhaps more accurate to talk of the Internet as a “space of communication” (p.94). Such space contains words and visuals, and what possibly has been overlooked is the role of culture. Much of the argument posed by Beeton, Yamamura and Seaton (2013) is posited on Japanese and South Korean fandom. This is ably illustrated by the work of Jang (2020) who analyses the world of anime and Otaku pilgrimages. These comic worlds of animations have significant following in the two countries and in addition



to their printed and internet based representations, the anime are discussed, analysed and followed by fans in internet blogs and fandoms and personalised into internalised worlds of self to the point where, argues Clyde (2020), fans become involved in fan-made sacred sites, cosplay activities and such activities become akin to acts of pilgrimage shared with others having similar values. Pilgrimage travel for these fans is an extension of daily rituals of devotion to watching and listening to the adventures of the various characters with whom they identify.

For the usual days of operation at Hobbiton and Daguanyuan, such fans are not normally present in great numbers as illustrated by the cluster analyses. Indeed, despite the differences in the cultural context, the findings show similar motives for visitation – namely a curiosity about the books and the visual representations. Yet those motives may be better understood through the lens of culture – for example, the Chinese visitor to Daguanyuan understands nuances through familiarity with the story, and indeed possibly knowledge of the fates of some of the leading actors in the 1987 series. Xiaoxu Chen, who played the leading role of Lin Daiyu, despite the fame that followed her performance, gave up acting and in 2007 became a Buddhist nun two months before dying from breast cancer – a life story not too dissimilar from themes found in the novel.

Such aspects of the novel might not be known to the European or American visitor. The asking of questions about motives for visitation that arose from the initial conversations with informants do not necessarily capture the cultural knowledge, and nor do they capture data from a third knowledge – the knowledge that may be gained from the Internet and global cosmopolitanism. In their analysis of global culture, Szerszynski & Urry (2002) cite the earlier work of Marx and Engels, identifying a “... need for a constantly changing market chases the bourgeoisie over the whole ... globe. It must settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere ... the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country ... The individual creations of individual nations become common property” (Marx and Engels, [1848] 1952; 46-7: emphasis added).

The commonality of these two sites in terms of sightseeing, entertainment, enjoyment, of fiction made real, is just as apparent as the (re)-telling of two very different types of stories set in different cultures. Yet both share a popularity,

and reach out to their audiences who would each recognize the motives for visitation. The sites and their narratives become a common property of the entertainment, leisure and tourism industries – each to be enjoyed at varying levels – from a shallow understanding based on a visual sense of the landscape and the solidity of the construction, to, at another extreme, a search into the legends and their deeper meanings for national and international culture. Yet in each case, it is the tourist who imputes meanings to the sites, just as the original film producers gave visualization to the plots. As Pythagoras was reputed to have commented – “Man is the measure of all things” (Sabine, 1937).

Implications

At a basic level of attracting tourists, film tourists can play a critical important role in the development of a tourism destination industry because they may recommend travel to the sites (Chiu & Zeng, 2016). Through the investigating of film tourists’ perceptions of Korea, Chiu and Zeng (2016) found that film tourists showed a stronger psychological attachment to Korea than others. They had “... seen the Korean films or television series and established emotional connection to the destination before visiting Korea; ... they are more likely to be satisfied their trip to Korea and developing their loyalty, ... as well as spread positive word-of-mouth” (Chiu & Zeng, 2016, p.669).

Film tourism has received considerable attention from academic scholars, even while few destination managers have retained control over how and to whom destinations are depicted through films (Chen, 2018; Kim & Kim, 2018b; O’Connor, Flanagan, & Gilbert, 2008). Films can be used as a secondary or tertiary attraction to add value to destination experiences (Oviedo-Garcia, et al, et al., 2016). Oviedo-Garcia, et al, et al. (2016) suggested that destination managers should consider the novelty factor as an element to enhance the tourist experience, while Sangkyun and Assaker (2014) found that audience involvement could positively influence the film tourism experience.

This paper simply confirms that a strong link exists between tourism, films and literature, but equally, while the results show this, the wider study (which is not wholly reported here) raised other questions, particularly when set in the context of “contents tourism” and the role of the internet. As noted, work by commentators such as Beeton, Yamamura, and Seaton, (2013), or Jang (2020) have sought to incorporate into the discourse a larger role to social media



and the ability of the internet to alter or change the way tourists generate perceptions and understandings of place. In a sense, those findings are indeed affected by content, but much of the content is based on an extremity of fandom. Search for fans, and they will be found, but a question remains, to what extent are such fans representative of the population of visitors? The two studies described above indicate that not every visitor to a film tourist site meets the criterion of “fandom”, just as every visitor to a religious site might not be a “pilgrim” – however one defines these terms. In short, this article suggests that before fully endorsing the notions of “contents tourism” and abandoning the earlier concepts of “film tourism” it may be better to view “contents tourism” as an extension to “film tourism” that is premised on social group reinforcement through the use of shared blogs and websites by the more committed to a given art form – a commitment that is used for purposes of self-identity as described by Jang (2020) with reference to Otaku pilgrimage.

Limitations to the study.

As with any study, particularly one based on empirical evidence, there are limitations. From an empirical perspective the two samples differ significantly in size which limits statistical comparisons between the two. Despite the often made claim that SEM-PLS can be conducted with small samples, in the 3rd edition of their book on partial least squares structural equation modelling, Hair et al (2022, p.24-26) specifically reject the notion that this is a general rule. It is certainly problematic when making comparisons, and particularly so when, as in this case, the questioning is not identical between the two studies. Second, as established above, the concept of “contents tourism” remain yet a niche interest, and as authors we remain ambiguous about the concept. From the perspective of Ryan, Zhang, and Deng (2011) much of tourism is spatially and temporally contextual, implying all tourism is contents driven. Hence the cultural aspects of tourism are pivotal to discussions about the meanings tourists derive from their studies. Therefore, the two separate questionnaires are arguably too much oriented towards subjective feelings rather than cognitive assessments of the cultural aspects of both sites.

Nonetheless the authors suggest there is value in the analysis. It emphasises that the meanings derived from film tourism sites come not only from the film and the novels on which they are based, but also the differential understandings possessed by tourists when making their visit. Those understandings range

from the facile to the detailed, and herein point to management perhaps needing to consider interpretation services as an essential component that can enhance the visitor experience. In stating this, if one looks at the way in which museums are globally embracing 5G and the internet of things as means of enhancing visitor experiences (Ch'ng et al., 2019; Shehade & Stylianou-Lambert,2020), one can see similar opportunities for film tourism sites.

Footnotes

1. As an aside, another, possibly more tenuous rationale of the choice of books and locations is that while of different cultures they share a New Zealand connection. The Lord of the Rings, written by an Oxford don, J.R.R. Tolkien, has been realized in Matamata through the building of Hobbiton which actualizes the descriptions in the novel. Likewise, the most popular translation into English of *The Dream of the Red Mansions* (alternatively *The Story of the Stone*) is by David Hawkes and John Minford, and the latter resides in Featherstone, New Zealand, and while both, like Tolkien, taught at Oxford University.
2. The above paper makes an allusion to literature and national character. The examples given are far from comprehensive, and the notion is complex. For those interested in concepts of Chinese national character the work of Xu Lu in his novella, *Ah Q* written in the 1920s is pertinent to the period of *Dream of the Red Mansions*, while the work of Lord Tweedsmuir writing as John Buchan would be representative of a popular perspective of British character in the 1930s.

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Appendices

Cluster analysis for Hobbiton

Table One Cluster Analysis for Hobbiton				
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
Motives	“LOTR” Fans	Natural scenery of Hobbiton enthusiast	Not Keen	“LOTR” interested visitors
I am interested in the novel, The Lord of the Rings (LOTR)	5.75	3.23	2.43	4.68
I saw the LOTR film trilogy	6.60	3.94	3.21	5.98
I am interested in the LOTR author, Tolkien	5.21	2.90	1.86	4.05
I am interested in the natural scenery of Hobbiton	6.17	6.39	4.00	4.75
I am interested in the screened location	6.29	6.10	3.36	4.27
I am interested in the theme of LOTR in Hobbiton Movie Set	6.16	5.35	2.93	4.20
I am interested in the exploration of the making of LOTR and creation of the Hobbiton Movie Set	6.14	5.65	3.04	4.20
I want satisfy my children’s LOTR interest	2.28	4.27	1.92	1.58
The accessibility of Hobbiton Movie Set	5.26	5.45	3.50	3.82
This is one of the most interested places in Waikato region, New Zealand	5.13	6.06	3.11	3.50
This place was recommended to me by friends	3.56	4.48	4.68	2.23
Number of cases in each Cluster	77	31	28	44
Percentage of total cases	42.78%	17.22%	15.56%	24.44%
Note : Mean 1=No importance, 2=Very little importance, 3=A little importance, 4=Of some importance, 5= Important, 6=Very important, 7=Very highly important				



Cluster 1 “LOTR” Fans

This cluster had 77 cases, which equalled 42.78 per cent of the sample. The highest mean score in this cluster was “I saw the LOTR film trilogy (mean=6.60)”, followed by “I am interested in the screened location (mean=6.29)”, “I am interested in the theme of LOTR in Hobbiton Movie Set (mean=6.16); and “I am interested in the exploration of the making of LOTR and creation of the Hobbiton Movie Set (mean=6.14)”; while having the lowest mean of 2.28 on “I want satisfy my children’s LOTR interest”. It can be seen that this group were more likely to be influenced by almost all of the motives related to LOTR “fandom”. Within this group were LOTR fans who wanted to explore the screened places. As Sofia (2014) has stated, films can provoke in the viewer a sense of anticipation regarding a given or potential tourist destination.

Cluster 2 Natural scenery of Hobbiton enthusiast

This cluster had 31 respondents, which accounted for 17.22 per cent of the total number.

The most significant motive in this cluster was “I am interested in the natural scenery of Hobbiton” with the mean of 6.39. It could be summarized that many respondents visited Hobbiton Movie Set because of the attractive natural scenery.

Cluster 3 Not Keen

Residents of this cluster were not keen about the attitudes of visiting Hobbiton Movie Set and generally had lower scores than others. It will be noted that the major reason for their presence at the site is the recommendation of others, and it is thought they were primarily in the company of another who possessed a stronger motivation for visitation.

Cluster 4 “LOTR” interested visitors

This cluster contained 44 cases, which made up 24.44 per cent of the total number.

Among their motivations, the respondents were interested in “LOTR” film trilogy, which motivated them to visiting the screened location. For example, the highest score was the item “I saw the LOTR film trilogy (mean=5.98)”, followed by “I am interested in the natural scenery of Hobbiton (mean=4.75)”.

Appendix Two

Cluster analysis for Daguanyuan

Table Two: Cluster analysis on tourists' motivation for Daguanyuan

	Enthusiasts	Relaxing and nice surroundings	Low scorers	Interested in 1988 TV series
I am interested in the Dream of Red Mansion	5.96	4.45	4.23	5.75
I saw the television series (1987 version) Dream of Red Mansion	6.02	2.12	3.75	6.07
I saw the television series (2010 version) Dream of Red Mansion	4.21	1.93	2.21	2.70
This place is of interest to friends/family besides myself	5.73	3.90	3.18	4.29
This place was recommended to me by friends	5.84	4.13	3.25	3.06
It is simply a nice place to visit	6.02	5.49	3.56	5.15
I am interested in gardens	6.01	5.25	3.47	4.51
I am interested in seeing places that can inform me of antiquity	6.30	5.89	4.05	5.80
I really came just for the tourism activities	3.94	2.24	2.21	2.22
This is a lovely setting for relaxation	5.87	5.54	3.48	4.83
This is one of the "must see" places in Beijing	5.90	5.05	2.66	4.59
I like this mixture between story-telling and history	6.27	5.70	3.93	5.89
It does not concern me that the Palace is "fake"	4.99	4.43	3.36	4.30
Number of cases in each cluster	343	214	214	369



Cluster One – Enthusiasts

Numbered 343 in total, and tended to have the highest scores across all items

Cluster Two – Relaxing and Nice Surroundings

A total of 214 respondents who enjoyed the mixture between story-telling and history but at best had only a moderate level of interest in the novel

Cluster Three – Low scorers

Again had 214 respondents, but for the most part had little interest in the site and were present either because they were accompanying friends or relatives who had a strong

interest in the site, or alternatively were present simply because it related to prescribed studies.

Cluster Four – Interested in 1988 TV series

These respondents had seen the original television series (which is easily accessible on the internet, and which is commonly shown in Asian television) and thus this was a strong motivation to visit the site.

Figures

Figure One: South Vegetable Garden, 1983



Source: Daguan yuan Administrative Committee

Figure Two: View of Daguan yuan, 2018



Source: Daguan yuan Administrative Committee