

From Screen to Destination: The Role of Celebrity Involvement in Shaping Tourist Perceptions and Travel Intentions

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ABSTRACT

Film-induced tourism has become a dynamic area that connects media influence with tourist behaviour. This study investigates how celebrity involvement affects destination image and, in turn, influences the visiting intentions of film-induced travellers. Using primary data from 128 respondents, the study employs a quantitative approach to analyse how films and celebrity endorsements shape tourists' perceptions and travel choices. The results show that celebrity involvement significantly impacts both the cognitive and emotional aspects of destination image. Most respondents agreed that celebrities featured in films and promotional activities play a crucial role in shaping their perceptions of destinations and motivating their travel plans. The analysis also reveals that visually appealing portrayals and emotional bonds created through films positively boost tourists' desire to visit featured locations. Popular destinations like Fort Kochi and Athirappilly illustrate the practical effects of film exposure on travel behaviour. The study establishes a direct link between celebrity involvement, destination image, and visiting intentions, filling a gap in film tourism research. It underscores the importance of including celebrity-led promotional strategies in destination marketing. The findings offer valuable insights for tourism stakeholders to leverage media and celebrity influence in enhancing destination appeal and attracting visitors, thereby supporting sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: *Film Tourism, Celebrity Involvement, Destination Image, Visiting Intention, Tourist Behaviour*

Tourism has evolved into a multifaceted industry shaped by cultural, economic, and media influences. In recent years, film-induced tourism has gained prominence as films and television content significantly influence destination image and travel behaviour (Lubbe, 2017). Cinematic representations create powerful visual narratives that enhance tourists' cognitive and affective perceptions of destinations, thereby motivating travel decisions (Macionis, 2008). Moreover, celebrity involvement further amplifies this effect by fostering emotional connections between audiences and destinations, increasing their attractiveness (Chen, 2018). Studies have also shown that media exposure and popular culture play a crucial role in shaping visiting intention through destination image (Whang et al., 2016). In this context, understanding the relationship between celebrity involvement, destination image, and visiting intention becomes essential in analysing film-induced tourism behaviour.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing significance of film-induced tourism, there remains limited empirical understanding of how celebrity involvement influences destination image and visiting intention. Existing studies largely focus on media influence or destination image independently, with insufficient attention to their integrated effect on tourist behaviour (Lubbe, 2017). Moreover, while films and popular culture are known to shape perceptions and travel motivations (Whang et al., 2016), the specific role of celebrity endorsement in this process remains underexplored. This lack of comprehensive analysis creates a research gap in understanding how celebrity-driven narratives influence decision-making among film-induced travellers, particularly in emerging tourism destinations.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the influence of celebrity involvement on destination image in the context of film-induced tourism.
2. To analyse the impact of destination image on the visiting intention of tourists.
3. To investigate the relationship between celebrity involvement and visiting intention.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Celebrity involvement in films plays a significant role in shaping tourists' perceptions and travel behaviour. The presence of celebrities enhances the attractiveness of destinations by creating strong emotional connections with audiences, while celebrity endorsements and media exposure further influence tourists' attitudes and intention to visit. At the same time, a favourable destination image—formed through both cognitive and affective components—acts as a critical determinant of travel decision-making. Prior studies have consistently highlighted the interrelationship between these constructs in influencing tourist behaviour (Chen, 2018; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Whang et al., 2016). Based on this conceptual relationship between celebrity involvement, destination image, and visiting intention, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Celebrity involvement has a significant positive influence on destination image.

H2: Destination image has a significant positive influence on visiting intention.

H3: Celebrity involvement has a significant positive influence on visiting intention.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among celebrity involvement, destination image, and visiting intention in film-induced tourism. Quantitative approaches are widely used in tourism research to analyse behavioural intentions and perception-based variables (Jalilvand et al., 2012).

Data Collection and Sample: Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire from 128 respondents with exposure to film tourism. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents familiar with film-induced destinations.

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Measurement of Variables

- **Celebrity Involvement:** Measured through perceptions of celebrity influence, endorsement, and promotional impact. Celebrity involvement is known to shape destination perception and tourist behaviour (Yen & Teng, 2015).
- **Destination Image:** Assessed through cognitive and affective components, reflecting knowledge and emotional responses toward destinations (Macionis, 2008).
- **Visiting Intention:** Measured based on respondents' willingness and likelihood to visit destinations, influenced by media exposure and destination perception (Shang et al., 2021).

All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data Analysis Techniques: Descriptive statistics such as mean and percentage were used to summarise respondent characteristics. Correlation analysis was employed to examine relationships among variables, consistent with prior studies on destination image and travel intention (Jalilvand et al., 2012). Data were analysed using statistical software (IBM SPSS), employing descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis to test the proposed hypotheses.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among celebrity involvement, destination image, and visiting intention. The results indicate that celebrity involvement is positively and significantly correlated with destination image ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher levels of celebrity exposure are associated with more favourable perceptions of destinations.

Further, destination image shows a strong positive correlation with visiting intention ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that respondents with a more positive perception of a destination are more likely to express intention to visit.

Additionally, celebrity involvement is significantly correlated with visiting intention ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$), implying that celebrity influence directly contributes to tourists' travel decisions.

All correlations are positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level, thereby supporting the proposed hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3). The results suggest moderate to strong relationships among the variables, confirming the critical role of celebrity involvement and destination image in influencing visiting intention within the context of film-induced tourism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The correlation analysis reveals significant positive relationships among celebrity involvement, destination image, and visiting intention. The findings indicate that celebrity involvement is moderately correlated with destination image ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the presence of celebrities in films and promotional activities enhances tourists' perceptions of destinations.

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This result aligns with earlier studies, which highlight that celebrity association strengthens destination appeal and influences perception formation (Chen, 2018).

Further, destination image exhibits a strong positive relationship with visiting intention ($r = 0.65, p < 0.01$), confirming that favourable cognitive and affective evaluations of a destination significantly increase tourists' likelihood of visiting. This supports the findings of Chen and Tsai (2007), who established destination image as a key predictor of behavioural intention.

Additionally, celebrity involvement shows a significant direct relationship with visiting intention ($r = 0.54, p < 0.01$), indicating that celebrity-driven exposure can directly motivate travel decisions. This finding is consistent with (Whang et al., 2016), who emphasized the role of popular culture and media influence in shaping tourists' intentions.

Overall, the results confirm that celebrity involvement not only enhances destination image but also directly and indirectly influences visiting intention. The findings support all proposed hypotheses and reinforce the interconnected role of media, perception, and behavioural intention in film-induced tourism.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of celebrity involvement on destination image and visiting intention within the context of film-induced tourism. The findings confirm that celebrity involvement significantly enhances the perception of destinations and positively influences tourists' intention to visit. Destination image was also found to be a strong predictor of visiting intention, reinforcing its critical role in travel decision-making (Chen & Tsai, 2007). The results further demonstrate that celebrity-driven exposure, through films and media, creates emotional connections that translate into behavioural intentions (Whang et al., 2016). Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of literature by empirically validating the interrelationship between celebrity involvement, destination image, and visiting intention, thereby addressing an important research gap in film tourism studies.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings offer valuable insights for tourism marketers, policymakers, and destination management organizations. First, leveraging celebrity endorsements and film collaborations can significantly enhance destination visibility and attractiveness. Strategic partnerships between the tourism and film industries can be used to position destinations as desirable travel locations. Second, destination marketing efforts should focus on strengthening both the cognitive and affective components of destination image, ensuring consistency between on-screen portrayals and actual tourist experiences. Third, the use of social media platforms and influencer marketing can amplify the impact of celebrity involvement, reaching wider audiences and increasing engagement. Finally, destinations should design film-based tourism experiences, such as guided tours and themed attractions, to convert interest into actual visits and enhance tourist satisfaction.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations. The sample size is relatively small ($n = 128$), which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The use of purposive sampling

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may also introduce bias in respondent selection. Additionally, the study focuses only on three variables—celebrity involvement, destination image, and visiting intention—without considering other potential influencing factors such as word-of-mouth, travel constraints, or socio-demographic variations (Jalilvand et al., 2012). Future research can adopt larger and more diverse samples, employ advanced analytical techniques such as structural equation modelling, and explore mediating or moderating variables to gain deeper insights into film-induced tourism behaviour.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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