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FILM TOURISM AND HIS INFLUENCE ON ECONOMIC OF NEW ZEALAND

Mass media has been proved to have a very powerful influence on people's lives and decisions. Lately, it has turned out to be very relevant in connection to tourism and the decisions individuals make on where they will travel and spend their leisure activities. There were a lot of researches carried out on this subject, discovering that mass media can be a powerful tool to influence the societies. Mass media plays an important role not only in the human behaviour, but also in motivating tourism behaviour. Nowadays, movies and TV series have ended up essential to what numerous individuals construct their travel choices on. [2]

New Zealand - the perfect Middle-earth

New Zealand's varied landscapes and unspoiled beauty offer the perfect backdrop to Middle-earth. Middle-earth might have been a figment of author JRR Tolkien's imagination but New Zealand bears an uncanny resemblance. Tolkien used the term Middle-earth to describe the "lands of men" or "mortal lands" in his books - *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* - and even created maps outlining the place surrounded by ocean that he called "the old fashioned word for the world we live in". For Sir Peter Jackson, the man who turned Tolkien's famous books into even more famous movies, the land he lives in - his home country of New Zealand - provides the perfect setting to produce moving picture adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and more recently *The Hobbit* Trilogy. After entirely filming *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy in New Zealand, Jackson was adamant that there was no reason to look outside the country for film locations for *The Hobbit* Trilogy as he considered New Zealand "the perfect Middle-earth".

Since the first movie *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, New Zealand has been dubbed Middle-earth. More than a decade later, 'Rings' and now 'Hobbit' fans continue to travel to the country to experience the mountains, lakes, rivers and plains that were the backdrop to the movies' famous scenes. More than 150 different locations throughout New Zealand were used to film *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, after Jackson and his team scoured the country for the most beautiful and diverse areas.

Film Tourism *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy based on Tolkien's fantasy epic generated US\$2.9 billion in worldwide box-office receipts, and another US\$3 billion from DVDs, merchandise and other sources. The multi-award-winning films also inspired New Zealand businesses to provide tours to the sites of many memorable movie scenes. Tours still operate in more than 30 locations today. Scores of tourists continue to visit New Zealand specifically to travel down Hobbit paths, hand-make their own personal 'One Ring', and handle replica swords, flags and helmets. International Visitor Arrivals continue to increase into New Zealand with *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* Trilogies a factor in stimulating interest in New Zealand as a destination. The Waikato region - where Hobbiton and the Shire are located in lush farmland near

Matamata - is probably the most memorably linked with The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit Trilogies. The working sheep farm with its rolling green hills and spectacular views to the Kaimai mountain range was been reconstructed in permanent materials for The Hobbit Trilogy, and continues to operate as a tourist attraction. Tongariro National Park in the North Island's central plateau became the Eryn Mui for The Lord of the Rings. Thousands now tread the same path as Frodo and Sam by walking the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, often described as one of the best one-day walks in the world. The 17km trek passes volcanoes, steaming fumaroles, jagged lava flows and crater lakes. From Wellington, The Lord of the Rings tours include helicopter rides over the limestone formations that formed Dimholt Road where Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli rode to meet the 'Army of the Dead'.

Spectacular natural scenery - such as The Remarkables mountain range, nearby lakes, vast valleys, forests and fiords - which has enthralled millions of movie-goers as Isengard, the Misty Mountains and the Ford of Bruinen - is an integral feature of the New Zealand tourism experience. This southern region is home to rare wildlife, ice-age glaciers, rugged mountains, deep lakes, meandering rivers and native forests - much of it unchanged since ancient times, yet all within a short distance of civilisation. Other Middle-earth tours cover the Nelson region which provided locations for Chetwood Forest, Rivendell and Dimrill Dale. In virtually every region of New Zealand, tourists will be reminded of Middle-earth and The Lord of the Rings Trilogy and The Hobbit Trilogy - The Lord of the Rings Trilogy was famously filmed in one hit, making it one of the longest and most massive productions in movie history.[1]

Researching

Research and data collected show us that movies can influence travel choices. One of the best examples, lately, has been New Zealand, which has been voted the world's top film tourism destination. It placed number one in a study commissioned by HBO Entertainment in 2015 about destinations made famous by movies and television. This study analysed the responses of 2000 adults and according to the results, one in four people choose their holiday destination based on the movie set they would like to visit and find out more about. New Zealand also recently placed third in USA Today's 'Best Cinematic Location' poll. According to the study carried by HBO Entertainment, the 10th places in Top 30 TV or Movie Destinations, look like this: 1. New Zealand – Lord of the Rings 2. New York, USA – Sex and the City 3. The Causeway Coast and Glens, Antrim, Northern Ireland – Game of Thrones 4. Las Vegas, USA – The Hangover 5. West Bay, Dorset, UK – Broadchurch 6. Alnwick Castle, Northumberland – Harry Potter 7. Paris, France – Inception 8. Benidorm, Spain – Benidorm 9. Iceland – Game of Thrones 10. Malta – Game of Thrones.

Film industry has been rapidly growing in New Zealand. It has shown an increase in revenues from movie production of \$7 million in 2014, reaching the value of \$3.155 billion. Working alongside with New Zealand Film Commission and Film New Zealand, the Tourism New Zealand succeeded to access opportunities of marketing and media impact to promote the country as an exceptional tourism destination. The movies that transformed New Zealand from a country known for diary exports into a world leader in film tourism have been the six Lord of the Rings and the Hobbits. These movie are one of the most successful franchises of all times, with earnings of billions of dollars. The studio that produced them is Warner Brothers – American entertainment

company – one of the major film studios with the headquarters in Burbank, California. Hence, tourism is currently the second largest industry in New Zealand, after dairy.

Conclusion

Looking at all the data gathered, movies made upon best-seller novels had brought an increase in the number of tourists for the set locations. But what helped the locations achieve the goal of becoming a top film tourist destination is a proactive participation of governments and specialist in marketing activities. Even though researches have shown film tourism as a considerable market, in order to have a successful film tourism, there is a need for a wide cooperation between a lot of parties involved like producers, screen agencies, film commissioners, tourism agencies, PR specialists and government.[2]

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