

# THE ROLE OF FILMS IN DESTINATION MARKETING AND AWARENESS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the major contributors towards the gross domestic product of any country. This sector plays a positive role in many factors such as employment rates and infrastructure development. One of the macroeconomic objectives is to employ the available factors of production such as labour. This is realised through many industries with tourism as one of them. South African tourism reported that, in 2010, the number of people directly employed in tourism was 567,378 contributing 4.3% to total employment in the country. Therefore, there is pressure for countries to market themselves constantly as tourism destinations so as to increase tourist arrivals, which in turn has an effect on various elements such as employment figures.

There are a variety of platforms which can be used to increase awareness of a destination, thereby contributing to an increase in tourist arrivals in the long-term. For example, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) use exhibitions, trade shows and hosting programmes to market and create awareness of their destinations. They also make use of sales agents and enter into general sales agreements with the trade with a view to increasing tourist numbers to the destination. The use of other platforms such as electronic marketing and billboards is common, with the latter being mainly targeted at domestic or regional markets. Organizations also produce marketing videos as a way of enticing visitors to their destinations.

These traditional methods of marketing/advertising have yielded certain results. However, there is massive competition around the world where countries constantly want to increase their share of tourist arrivals. Organizations which are funded by shareholders/governments to develop and increase tourism numbers are under pressure to show their funders a return on investment. As such, DMOs and relevant stakeholders have to devise innovative ways of marketing their destinations worldwide and move beyond the use of traditional forms of marketing.

Film-induced tourism is regarded as having a role in inducing visitors to the places they have seen on the television or movie screen. This paper seeks to explore this concept by determining the role of film in marketing and destination awareness.

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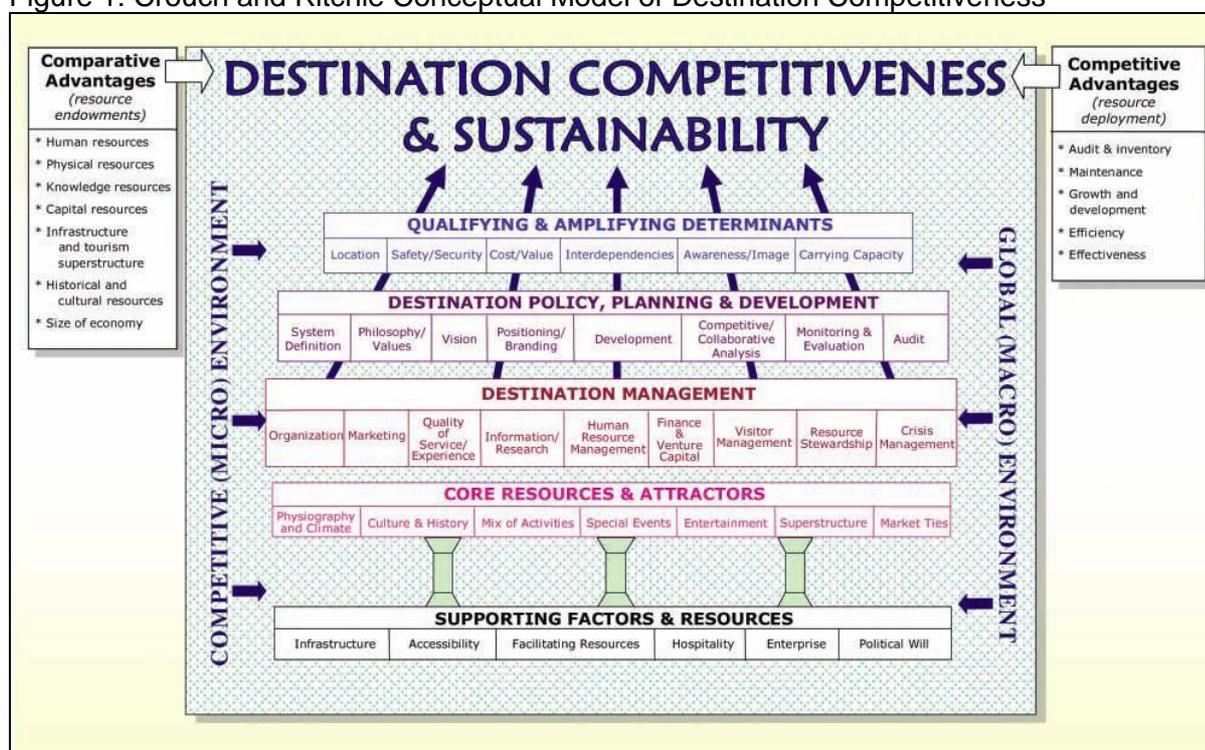
## 2. BACKGROUND

There are various forms of marketing consumer goods and products. Companies use various media such as newspapers, magazines, television and radio to do so. The environment in which businesses and organizations operate changes constantly. As such, the manner in which marketing activities are carried out by businesses has to change or at least adapt to the changing environment in order to survive.

As Crouch (2011) states, tourist destinations, like all consumer products, must persuade their customers that they have some combination of benefits which no one else can offer. Consequently, governments and their relevant tourism counterparts have had to consider other forms of creating awareness of their destinations and go beyond the traditional ways of doing so. This has been done through supporting sports events, conferences and other mega-events such as the Olympics. Governments put significant amount of money towards the staging of these events as they want to promote their destinations to a global audience. Other innovative ways to achieve destination awareness can be in a form of films as they are widely seen and have more of a global presence than do traditional methods of marketing.

According to a model of Destination Competitiveness by Crouch and Ritchie (2000) cited in Crouch (2011), a destination has to have certain factors in order to be competitive. They identified five groups under which different destination's competitiveness attributes fall. As shown in Figure 1, the model identified 36 attributes of destination competitiveness. One of the important suggestions the model makes is that marketing plays a critical role in destination management.

Figure 1: Crouch and Ritchie Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness



(Crouch, 2011)

Heath (2002) also reinforced the importance of destination marketing in his model titled 'Towards a model to enhance Africa's sustainable tourism competitiveness'. He emphasised that destinations should enhance the appeal of a destination through a program of marketing efforts. He quoted Dwyer (2001) who indicated that such activities should include the creation of high level destination awareness, development of a strong destination image, selection of appropriate market segments, development of strong links with tourism wholesalers and retailers and the development of attractive and flexible tour packages (Heath, 2002: 347). The first activity, i.e. the creation of high level destination awareness, forms part of this paper to a larger degree than the others.

This paper briefly looks at the literature review pertaining to film-induced tourism. It highlights filmmaking in South Africa and then describes the different roles of the three film commissions in South Africa.

### 3. FILM-INDUCED TOURISM: LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Definitions

According to Beeton (2010), early research in the field of film-induced tourism only focused on the numbers of people visiting places which were featured in movies. This was aimed at providing evidence of the significance of this new field of study. Film-induced tourism emanated from an earlier term of movie-induced tourism. The latter was subsequently changed to *film-induced tourism* as researchers took notice of the TV series which then led to an expansion of the term to include television and cinema (Beeton, 2010). Hudson and Ritchie (2006) define film tourism as visits to a destination or attraction as a result of the destination's feature on television, video, or the cinema screen. O'Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert (2008) point out though that television series usually have more long-term impacts than film unless the film is extremely popular.

Riley and van Doren (1992), cited in Carl, Kindon & Smith (2007: 51), state that films can act as hallmark events and as pull factors to increase tourist numbers. This was based on research at films sites in the USA and Australia where well known movies were filmed. Riley, Baker & Van Doren (1998) also associated major movies to hallmark events as they partly meet the definition of such events. These are described as "*major one-time or recurring events of limited duration developed to primarily enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a destination in the short and/or long-term. These events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention*".

Based on the definition of hallmark events, Riley and Van Doren (1992) cited in Carl *et al.*, (2007: 51) concluded that three criteria of a successful film are crucial to induce film tourism and these are uniqueness, status and timely significance. They maintained that if a film has these qualities, it will magnify the tourism potential of a destination.

#### Case Studies

With the release of the film trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings* between 2001 and 2003, Carl, *et al.* (2007) indicate that the New Zealand government together with commercial operators have since invested in the promotion of the country as 'Middle-Earth' which is the mythical world found in books which were later adapted into this film. What the government of New Zealand together with the operators did was what Morgan and Pritchard (1998) cited in Kim and Richardson (2003: 219) referred to. They noted that the popular view of a place offered by media may prompt that place to recreate its own identity in that image.

The film, *The Lord of the Rings*, contributed significantly to creating the awareness of New Zealand as a destination. According to Hudson and Ritchie (2006), the estimated exposure that New Zealand achieved through the first *The Lord of the Rings* film was worth over US\$41 million. In other words, this is the amount that the exposure would have cost had they accessed it commercially. As Hudson, Wang & Gil (2011: 180) state, the exposure a film gives a city, province or country is an advertisement viewed by potentially millions of people, an audience that could not be reached through specifically targeted tourism promotions.

Research has been conducted on places which were featured in films. Kim and Richardson (2003) cited research conducted by Stewart (1997) whose result showed that seeing the film, *Braveheart*, had an influence on tourists' decisions to come to the area where it was shot and to other attractions and destinations portrayed in that film. Hudson and Ritchie (2006) looked at research that had been conducted on the subject of film-induced tourism after which they summarized the positive impacts that film/television can have on tourism. This is illustrated in Figure 2. These results echo the view of Kim and Richardson (2003: 219) that as film and television viewing continue to expand, so too will influence on place images. The results also support a study cited in

Hudson, *et al* (2011) which found that in the UK, approximately 1 in 10 foreign visitors come as a result of seeing the country depicted in film.

Figure 2: Film Tourism Impacts

Film or TV Series	Location	Impact on Visitor Numbers or Tourist Revenue
Braveheart	Wallace Monument, Scotland	300% increase in visitors year after release
Heartbeat	Goathland, North Yorkshire, England	Three times the number of normal visitors in 1991
Deliverance	Rayburn County, Georgia	20,000 film tourists a year Gross revenues \$2 to 3m
Dances with Wolves	Fort Hayes, Kansas	25% increase compared with 7% for previous 4 years
Close Encounters of the Third Kind	Devils Tower, Wyoming	75% increase in 1975 20% visit now because of the film
Thelma and Louise	Arches National Monument in Moab, Utah	19.1% increase in 1991
Field of Dreams	Iowa	35,000 visits in 1991 Steady increase every year
Dallas	Southfork Ranch, Dallas	500,000 visitors per year
The Lord of the Rings	New Zealand	10% increase every year 1998 to 2003 from UK
Steel Magnolias	Louisiana	48% increase year after release
Last of the Mohicans	Chimney Rock Park, North Carolina	25% increase year after release
The Fugitive	Dillsboro, North Carolina	11% increase year after release
Little Women	Orchard House, Concord, Massachusetts	65% increase year after release
Bull Durham	Durham, North Carolina	25% increase in attendance year after release
Harry Potter	Various locations in U.K.	All locations saw an increase of 50% or more
Mission: Impossible 2	National parks in Sydney	200% increase in 2000
Gorillas in the Mist	Rwanda	20% increase in 1998
Crocodile Dundee	Australia	20.5% increase in U.S. visitors 1981 to 1988
The Beach	Thailand	22% increase in youth market in 2000
All Creatures Great and Small	Yorkshire Dales	Generated £5m for Yorkshire Dales
To the Manor Born	Cricket St Thomas, Leisure Park, England	37% increase between 1978 to 1980
Middlemarch	Stamford, Lincolnshire, England	27% increase in 1994
Four Weddings and a Funeral	The Crown Hotel, Amersham, England	Fully booked for at least 3 years
Mrs. Brown	Osborne House, Isle of Wight, U.K.	25% increase
Notting Hill	Kenwood House, England	10% increase in 1 month
Saving Private Ryan	Normandy, France	40% increase in American tourists
Sense and Sensibility	Saltram House, England	39% increase
Pride and Prejudice	Lyme Park in Cheshire, UK	150% increase in visitors
Cheers	Location in Boston	\$7m in unpaid promotional advertising each year
Miami Vice	Miami	150% increase in German visitors 1985 to 1988
Forrest Gump	Savannah, Georgia	7% increase in tourism
Troy	Canakkale, Turkey	73% increase in tourism
Captain Corelli's Mandolin	Cephalonia, Greece	50% increase over 3 years

Hudson and Ritchie (2006:389)

Films play a role in influencing decisions to visit a particular destination. Hudson, *et al* (2011: 178) noted a study which found that after family, friends and the internet, television shows and films were the next key influencer on the decision to travel to a particular destination.

### Authenticity

Carl, *et al.*, (2007) argue that the film scenes are a combination of reality and production sets. As such they are not a true reflection of the places portrayed. However, Kim and Richardson (2003) argue that although the images developed through films and television may be artificial, they nonetheless influence tourism marketers and consumers to a large degree.

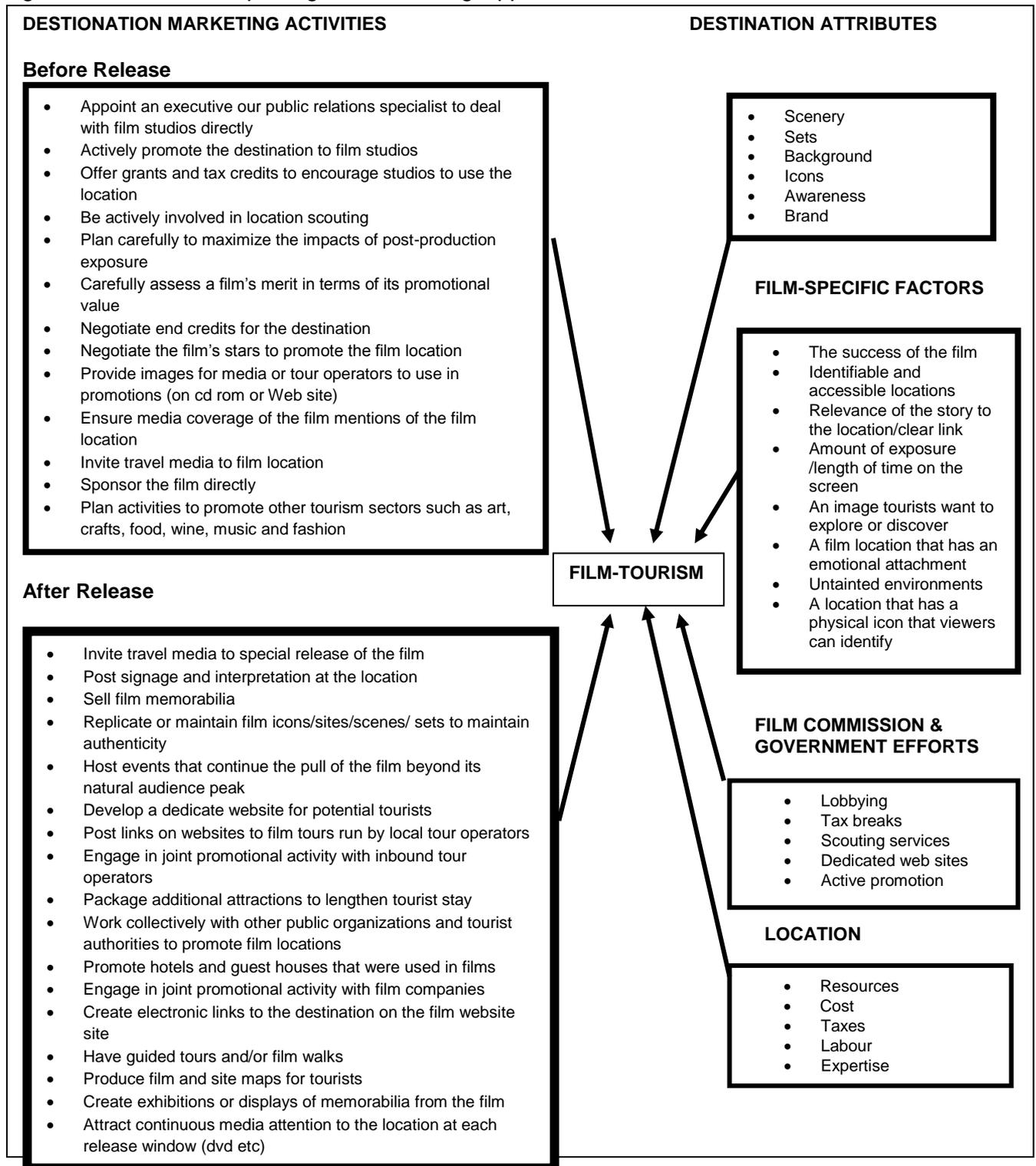
Kim and Richardson (2003: 217) state that news coverage and popular culture (films, television programmes and literature) can provide substantial information about a place in a short period of time. They point out that news and popular culture products are so deeply embedded in everyday life that they are likely to have high market penetration and can dramatically alter an image of the place. As such, Butler (1990), cited in Kim and Richardson (2007), indicates that these films would overtake the print media in shaping the images of these places.

### Marketing Opportunities

A model developed by Hudson and Ritchie (2006) gives an indication of the film marketing opportunities that should be exploited. The model (Figure 3) identified five factors critical to the success of film tourism. These are destination marketing activities, destination attributes, film-specific factors, film commission/government efforts and location feasibility. This model indicates

that there are marketing activities which should be undertaken before and after the release of a film.

Figure 3: A Model for Exploiting Film Marketing Opportunities



Hudson and Ritchie (2006:390)

The creators of the model above acknowledge though that film tourism is complex and a dynamic concept and as such, its success also depends on a number of factors which are beyond the control of a destination. This view was also supported by O'Conner, *et al.*, (2008) in their study of

Yorkshire where they concluded that the success of film-induced tourism in this area was reliant on many factors outside the destination's control.

The model emphasised the role DMOs and film commissions play in film-induced tourism. The former's role is important so as to align the portrayal of the destination with intended images. As Hudson, *et al* (2011) state, the images consumers have of a destination come from controlled and direct marketing initiatives by tourism organizations and indirectly from other sources including films and TV programmes.

### Case Studies: How DMOs Use Film Making Opportunities

Based on the research by Hudson and Ritchie (2006: 391), DMOs are beginning to forge relationships with film commissions to track productions and film releases so that organizations are in a position to act as soon as they see the signs of film tourism. They cite various examples of such relationships such as the film commission of the Bahamas, which is supported by the Ministry of Tourism. The latter is involved at the outset after it receives a film script. Another example is that of the Australian Tourism Commission which collaborated with Disney on a film, *Finding Nemo*. The former is said to be the first DMO to try promotion through an animated film.

An increasing body of knowledge from Asia suggests that film tourism is particularly significant in those cultures (Beeton, 2010). The relevance of this type of tourism, particularly in the Asian culture, is supported in the article published by Hudson and Ritchie (2006) in which they mentioned that VisitBritain has been targeting Indian film producers persuading them to use British locations for Bollywood films in order to benefit Britain's tourism industry.

Tourism organizations can therefore use films as springboards for marketing campaigns if they are seen as appropriate for the destination (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006: 387). Marketers can use films to create publicity for their regions. For example, media clippings which mentioned that *The Lord of the Rings* was filmed in New Zealand were produced. This provided early linkages between the film and the location (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006).

### Negative Issues

There are negative issues associated with film-induced tourism. These relate to visitor dissatisfaction if the location visited is completely different to that viewed in the film. This is largely attributed to the film scenes being a combination of reality and production sets as alluded to by Carl *et al.*, (2007). Another downside relates to the process of filming not taking place in the location represented in the storyline. Butler (1990), cited in Beeton (2010), points out that many films are not shot at the locations that are supposedly represented through film. This may then provide an incorrect image of a particular destination. However, O'Conner, *et al.* (2008), argue that films have the ability to influence the tourism marketers and tourists even though the destination image might be untrue.

What may also be regarded as a negative issue is that film stakeholders are interested in creating the film they want and not necessarily the type of image that the tourism stakeholders may desire (O'Conner, *et al*, 2008: 425). These researchers add that production companies look for locations that reflect the script and the director's perception of how the storyline should be portrayed. Destination marketing is thus not their priority. Notwithstanding this, the exposure a film gives a city, province or country is an advertisement potentially viewed by millions of people as alluded to by previous authors highlighted in this paper.

#### 4. FILM MAKING IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to SouthAfrica.info, foreign filmmakers are taking advantage of South Africa's attributes i.e. unique locations, low production costs and favourable exchange rate, which makes filming in the country cheaper than Europe, the US or Australia. The South African government has identified this industry as a sector with potential for growth. This is evident through the efforts made by the South African Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in providing film incentives. The DTI reports on its website that the government of South Africa offers a package of incentives to promote its film production and post-production industry. The incentives are geared towards foreign and South African film and TV productions. The objectives of the former are to 'encourage and attract large-budget films and television productions and post-production work that will contribute towards employment creation, enhancement of international profile and increase the country's creative and technical skills base' (DTI, no date). The latter is intended to support the local film industry and to contribute towards employment opportunities in South Africa (DTI, no date).

South Africa's film industry contributes at least 0.4% towards the global outputs. Even though this figure is low, it is however reported that the film industry in the country is improving all the time (SouthAfrica.info, 2008). It has also been reported by South Africa.info (2008) that the DTI indicated that South Africa's entertainment industry is valued at approximately R7.4 billion, with film and television generating more than R5.8 billion in economic activity each year. They further report on the economic impact study which was commissioned by the Cape Film Commission which found that the industry has a direct annual turnover of more than R2.65 billion and contributes an indirect annual turnover of more than R3.5 billion to South Africa's gross domestic product (SouthAfrica.info, 2008).

There have been many films which have been created about South Africa. The majority of these have been triggered by the past political situation of the country. Many of them have involved well-known international actors, possibly as a way to draw attention to the films and increased revenue. In many instances, this approach has caused debates about South Africans not taking leading roles in films pertaining to their own stories. This debate, however, is not the focus of this paper and goes beyond its scope.

South Africa has had a string of films shot in the country and many of these have received international attention. Below are some of the famous films which were either about South Africa or filmed within the country:

- i. Shaka Zulu
- ii. Cry Freedom
- iii. Sarafina
- iv. Tsotsi
- v. Invictus
- vi. Yesterday
- vii. Blood Diamond
- viii. U Carmen E Khayelitsha

As many of these received international attention and some of them, such as *Tsotsi*, even winning the Academy Award, it can be concluded that these films have increased the awareness of South Africa. However, the extent to which these movies have highlighted South Africa as a tourist destination could not be determined.

## 5. FILM COMMISSIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Film commissions have an important role to play within the realm of film-induced tourism as highlighted in the literature review. South Africa has realised the benefits of filmmaking within the country. As a result, there are three film commissions which are operating, namely, the Cape Town, Gauteng and KZN Film Commissions. These are briefly discussed below.

The KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Film Commission was launched on 23 July 2012 in Durban, South Africa (Mkamba, 2012). It is an agency falling under the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism. It was reported by Loubster (2012: 1) that the core functions of the commission would be to develop and grow infrastructure and facilities for film, television and multi-media industries in the province of KZN, to facilitate policy, legislation and regulations necessary for the promotion of the industry, to attract foreign and local investment and funding into the industry, and to co-ordinate and provide advice, support and access to funding/incentives for filmmakers.

The Cape Film Commission (CFC) states on its website that it works closely with a variety of stakeholders such as the City of Cape Town, Provincial Property, other government agencies, parastatals and industry representative bodies to promote Cape Town and the Western Cape as a filmmaking destination. It states its vision as follows: *“to position Cape Town and the Western Cape as a globally competitive film destination thereby creating sustainable jobs, business opportunities, boosting tourism, and developing core skills related to the film and ancillary industries”*.

The Gauteng Film Commission (GFC) is an agency of the Gauteng Provincial Government. It states on its website that its role is to develop, promote and coordinate the film and television production industry in Gauteng. It is tasked with the responsibility of positioning the province as a world-class destination for film-making as well as attracting local and international investments in the film and television industry. In this regard, it works with the film industry, government and other key stakeholders.

The common denominator amongst all these commissions is that they either work with or form part of provincial governments. It therefore provides an indication of the importance that government has placed on film-making in the country. The existence of these bodies indicates that competition amongst the provinces is rife as they all want a share of the film industry. It therefore becomes very important that each region distinguishes itself from the others. It also suggests that they must be aggressive and innovative in how they engage with various stakeholders such as film-makers both locally and internationally. The use of the model as conceptualised by Hudson and Ritchie (2006) becomes important in exploiting film-making opportunities in which DMOs should also take part.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper discussed various aspects relating to film-induced tourism. It described the situation of rife competition in the tourism industry and as such, destination marketers have to devise innovative ways of enhancing the awareness of their destinations. It looked at some of the literature that has been published on the subject of film-induced tourism. Earlier literature focused on the impact films and television series have had on the destination they were shot. This paper showed that many of these have had positive impacts on the destinations in which they were filmed.

The paper showed the important role that film commissions and government play in ensuring that film-induced tourism bears fruit. A model which looked at exploiting film marketing opportunities

was highlighted. This particular model suggested destination marketing activities that need to be undertaken before and after the release of films. It also highlighted destination attributes such as the location and various factors needed for the success of film-tourism. The paper through the literature noted that there are factors critical to the success of this form of tourism which are beyond the control of the destination.

Some of the films which were linked to South Africa were highlighted. As some of them won international awards, it can be concluded that they raised the standard of film making in the country. However, the extent to which they had an impact on South Africa as a tourism destination could not be determined. It is important that South Africa as a country begins to conduct research on film-induced tourism. This will go a long way in establishing the impacts that films have on increasing the awareness of a country as a tourism destination.

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