

# Film Induced Tourism: Destination Image Formation and Tourist Decision-Making

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## Abstract

Effects of film induced tourism are relatively a new topic which has evolved in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many countries have started promoting tourist destination of their country with various film studios and film makers by encouraging them to do film shooting. One such country is Malaysia and is the chosen country for this study. Malaysia is considered as the second home of Tamil cinema (Kollywood). The researcher was part of the tour to visit Malaysia. The study was conducted at famous tourist spots in Malaysia. Interview method was used to collect qualitative data. The interview was done casually with the tourist to know why and how they came to know about the tourist spot and was there any film, which influenced them to visit the place. The tourist spots used to collect data were Batu caves, KLCC twin towers and Putra Jaya the nation capital. The study found that it was Tamil films and songs, which influenced them to visit Malaysia and the tourist spot shown in the film.

**Keywords:** Films, Film Induced Tourism, Decision Making, Tourist Experience

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is defined as a movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes wherein art form like film or movies create the cinematic image of the objects, subjects and locations of the chosen destination. The cinematic or screen images motivate the audiences to travel to the locations where the movies are shot. In the service industry, film and tourism are two independent sectors, but in the last decade the combined term such as movie-induced tourism (Riley, Dwayne and Carlton, 1998) has gained increased attention from academics and the industry alike. In 2005, Beeton introduced the term 'film-induced tourism' with an idea to include television (TV) films and mini-series in the same concept (Hudson and Ritchie 2006). The film-induced tourism is related to tourist visitation of a location or region in which the film was shot. There are various names given to film tourism like film-induced tourism, movie-induced tourism, media-induced tourism, screen tourism, cinematographic tourism and even 'media pilgrimage' (Karpovich 2010). In short, the cinematic image of destinations, places, cities or countries in the movie has integrated the entertainment and tourism sectors (Dimoudis 2018).

The main purpose of a film is not the promotion of the tourist places. Tourism sector by itself has a promotional video and marketing concept to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a destination. However, the cinematic image of places/destination and audio-visual content generated in the

film impacts the awareness, interest, attention and choice of travel destinations. Usually popular films and television programs attracts the ardent fans or gathers audiences constantly. The appeal of the film locations motivates the potential tourists. A favorable destination image influences the motivation and attention of tourist in increasing the probability of tourist destination to be chosen (Tuclea and Nistoreanu 2011).

According to Macionis (2004), there are three main categories of the film-induced tourists: (i) general tourists with no specific interests in the place featured in films; (ii) incidental film tourists who come across the film destination during the trip; (iii) dedicated film tourists who specifically travel to exact film destination. Further, Roesch (2009) categorized the tourists based on the tourist age: (i) gappies are the backpackers, mostly in their 20s and plan a low budget trip; (ii) revivals are the middle aged (generally in their 40s) film induced tourists travelling to destinations with their partner or families and spending extravagantly; (iii) initials these are the tourists above 60 years. Different motives like moving out of the everyday environment, exploration and self-evaluation, education, nostalgia, social interaction, relaxation, prestige or feel of celebrity status, relive a cinematic experience, holiday destination are the potential focal point of tourist interest which directly influence the choice of destination (Heitmann 2010). Additionally, variables like travel stimuli kindled by marketing strategy, previous travel experiences, the perceived risk, destination knowledge influences the decision making process. After the release of certain movies there has been a drastic increase in the tourist movement, the growth in tourism and hotel market (Hudson and Ritchie 2006).

## 2. Need for the Study

Many Indian films have done shooting in many countries. One such country is Malaysia. However, do the films make an impact on tourist travel decision making and visitation of the places shown in the film is needed.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To study how Tamil films can influence individuals to visit Malaysia and
2. To understand how Tamil films can influence tourists to visit various tourist places which are shown in the film while they visit Malaysia.

## 4. Review of Literature

The tourism literature covers vast studies on destination image, destination choice and other factors that play a significant role in increasing the tourism. The increased popularity of films and featured destinations are promoting the film-induced tourism. This section covers the literature related to film-induced tourism.

Lee, Scott and Kim (2008) investigated the impact of celebrity on the perception of tourism destinations. They found that celebrity involvement, affects the familiarity and visitation intentions. They suggested visitation intentions are influenced by the cognitive and affective images of the destination which the celebrity creates in the story.

Ward and O'Regan (2009) suggested that film-induced tourism can play a significant role in integrating film production, tourism and place. Taking an example of the Gold Coast they suggested that production service is a unique segment of tourist business. The expertise, infrastructure, economy of place creates the branding of places as production locations for the cinema or TV industry. They inferred that in reference to the Gold Coast, tourism has played an important role in the development of the Gold Coast as a green field production location.

Buchmann et al (2010) in a case study of *Lord of the Rings* film-induced tourism to New Zealand studied the overlapping concepts of authenticity, hyper reality and simulacra to understand the tourist experience. He found that authenticity of objects and sights, sincerity of relationships, depthful experiences are the underpinning factors in tourism.

Hahm and Wang (2011) explored the impact of film projected destination's image on travel intentions. They found that rather than an overall image the specific attributes of destination acts as a mediating variable on the tourist intentions to visit the place. They suggested that cleanliness, safety, quality of shopping sites and accommodation, natural and cultural sites, value for money are some of the positive attributes which influence the tourist decisions.

## 6. Research Methodology

Interview method was used to collect qualitative data from two families, each consisting of seven member from Chennai and Madurai. The interview was conducted to know why and how they came to know about the tourist spot and was there any film, which influenced them to visit the place. The tourist spots used to collect data were Batu Caves, KLCCT win Towers, Penang and Putra Jaya the nation capital.

Malaysia is one of the popular tourist destinations in the world. It is ranked ninth in the world for tourism arrival. The government of Malaysia has made several initiatives in the past few years to promote tourism in the country with the aim of diversifying the economy and making it less dependent on exports (Misachi 2017). With a handful of films shooting there, Malaysia seems to have become a favorite destination for Kollywood filmmakers (Suganth 2017).

Interview was conducted to tourists from Tamil Nadu, India. With two family who came from Chennai and Madurai, two Honey moon couples one from Trichy and the other from Coimbatore and group of boys consisting of seven members from Pondicherry.

The family from Chennai came to Malaysia to visit main places of attractions in Malaysia. It was their 4<sup>th</sup> visit to Malaysia. They knew almost everything about Malaysia and the places of tourist attraction. Since, they were interviewed at Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur; they expressed how they visit Batu Caves and Penang Waterfall Murugan temple because their favorite god was Murugan. They were impressed with the current changeover in Batu Caves. The first time they visited Batu Caves and Penang hill top temple was in 2015. Tamil Nadu is well known for its devotees and devotional songs. During the 1960's and 1970's several devotional movies based on Hindu God and Goddess were released. The concerned family came to know about Batu Caves and Penang Waterfall Murugan temple through one such film - Varuvan Vadivelan. They explained how they had heard the news about Batu Caves from the director.



Figure 1. Varuvan Vadivelan

They also got to know about Batu Caves through the Ajith starrer movie Billa. The song Seval Kodi parakuthada song features the temple with breathtaking cinematography.



Figure 2. Billa

Lord Murugan statue is the tallest statue of Hindu deity in Malaysia. Ringgit Malaysia 2.5 Million has spent to build this statue. It is 140<sup>ft</sup> tall. This statue is made of 350 tons of steel bars. 1550 cubic metres of concrete and 300 litres of gold paint was used to build this statue by 15 sculptors from India. The family said that the movie Billa had influenced and attracted tourists from India to Malaysia and that they had been influenced too.

Other than Varuvan Vadivelan and Billa, they claimed to have seen Malaysian Airport in Lily Malarukku Kondattam from Ulagam Sutrum Valiban movie starring MGR, Manjula, Latha, Nambiar and Asogan. Several scenes were shot at Malaysia. For example, the ferry scene in the song Oonjalukku Poochutti from the Sivaji Ganesan starrer movie Avanthan Manithan was shot at Penang. Other than Batu Caves and Penang Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Waterfall temple, the tourists went to Langkawi, Melaka, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru. They were aware that Kabali, IruMugan, Puthukottaiyilirundhu Saravanan has been shot in Malaysia. They knew that the flashback scene from the movie Anegan was shot in Penang.

Another group of friends from Pondicherry visited Malaysia for the first time. Their friend, working in Malaysia chose to be their tourist guide. They claim they got to know about Malaysia through their friend and few movies like Billa, Kabali, Meenkuzhambum Man Paanaiyum, Anegan, IruMugan, Vellaikaran and Puthukottaiyilirundhu Saravanan. They identify that these films were shot in Malaysia by seeing the scenes and from news & interviews regarding this film. The poster release of Kollywood actor Vikram's next film Kadaram Kondan has the Petron as Twin Tower in the background, thereby making the fans guess that the story and the plot of the movie might revolve around Malaysia. .



Figure 3.Kadaram Kondan First Look

The two newly married couples who were visiting Malaysia claimed to have identified films which had songs shot in Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Langkawi. They also told that the climax scene of Billa was shot in the hanging bridge of Langkawi and they were leaving to Langkawi to experience the country side of Malaysia as it is shown in the film Pudhukottaiyilirundhu Saravanan. Alli Thandha Vaanam (2001), a Tamil Romantic drama film directed by Sridar Prasad starring Murali, Prabhu Deva and Laila in the lead role had three songs shot in various locations in Malaysia.

Following are the various films shot in Malaysia:

### **Anegan**

Some of the scenes for the movie Anegan were shot in and outside the Pinang Peranakan Mansion in Church Street, Penang. It is learnt that some scenes of Dhanush playing football were also filmed at the Penang Free School and in Stewart Lane. A wedding scene was also shot at a Hindu temple in York Road and some scenes at Chew Jetty.



Figure 4. Anegan

### **Anniyan**

Anniyan is a 2005 Tamil psychological thriller film written and directed by S. Shankar. The song Kanna Kanna Nokia has been shot at KLCC and KL Tower.



Figure 5. Anniyan

### Dasavathaaram

Dasavathaaram is a 2008 Indian Tamil Science fiction film, directed by K.S.S Ravikumar. It stars Kamal Hassan, who also wrote the screenplay and story of the film in ten distinct roles. Major portions of the films were shot extensively in overseas locations which included the US, Tokyo, Malaysia and Thailand. A song involving Kamal Haasan and Mallika Sherawat that was to be shot in US was moved to Malaysia due to problems with Sherawat's visa. The crew instead decided to shift to another destination in Malaysia and the song was shot in posh night clubs; Furthermore scenes were shot at a lobby of a prominent Malaysian airport.



Figure 6. Dasavathaaram

### EngaAmma Rani

EngaAmma Rani is a 2017 Tamil language horror drama film directed by S. Bani starring Dhansika in the lead role. The whole movie has been shot in Malaysia

### MeenKuzhambum Mann Paanaiyum

MeenKuzhambum Mann Paanaiyum is a 2016 Indian Tamil fantasy comedy film was taken in parts of West Malaysia. Prabu the lead actor of this film owns a restaurant at Malaysia.



Figure 7. MeenKuzhambum Mann Paanaiyum

### **Kaavalan**

Kaavalan is a 2011 Tamil language action film written and directed by Siddique starring Vijay and Asin in the lead roles. A song “SadaSada” from this was shot at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Figure 8. Kaavalan

### **Kabali**

The Kabali movie deals with the plight of migrant Indian community, specifically the Tamilians, who lived in Malaysia. About 30 years back in time, many of the Indian laborers working in Malaysia, used to work as drug traffickers and goons under Chinese mafia gangs. One man, Kabaleeswaran alias Kabali (Rajanikanth), takes a stand for the betterment of his community. Himself a gang member working under gangster Sitaramaraj (Naazar), Kabali takes over the gang leadership on Sitaramaraj's untimely death. With the gang leadership, also comes the rival gang confrontations especially with Gang 43 lead by the ruthless drug lord Tony Woo (Winston Chao). The balance story is all about how the gangs try to revenge and try to kill Kabali whether Tony's revenge has been fulfilled or not. (Kumar, 2016).



Figure 9. Kabali

### **IruMugan**

IruMugan is a 2016 Indian Tamil Language science fiction thriller film written and directed by Anand Shankar. Vikram acted in dual roles as hero and villain and Nayanthara and Nithya Menon as lead roles as well. Quarter of the film IruMugan has been shot in Malaysia because the story itself starting at Malaysia as an elderly Malaysian man goes ballistic and kills several Indian officers in a span of 5 minutes of the Indian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia before collapsing. Malaysian Police investigate the case and the reason behind the elderly man collapse and the effect and how the hero try to protect villain from doing illegal things is the half of the story.



Figure 10. IruMugan

### **PudhuKottaiyilirundhu Saravanan**

Pudhukottaiyilirundhu Saravanan is a 2004 Tamil action comedy film written and directed by S.S. Stanley. Dhanush is sent to Singapore for work to settle the debts of his family. He kills one senior workmate tries to run away from Singapore to India. On the way, he meets a girl in Malaysia. So, he walks, hitchhikes and drives through Malaysia, Thailand, Burma to get to India.



Figure 11. PudhuKottaiyilirundhu Saravanan

### Velaikaran

Velaikaran is a 2017 Indian Tamil language action thriller written and directed by Mohan Raja. The company scene has been shot at Malaysia. It's one of the companies located in Klang.



Figure 12. Velaikaran

### Ayan

Ayan is a 2009 Tamil action film co written and directed by K. V. Anand. Few scenes and songs have been shot Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Malaysian Airport.



Figure 13. Ayan

### Thillalangadi

Thillalangadi is 2010 Indian Tamil language action comedy film directed by M. Raja. Few scenes have been shot at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Petronas Twin Towers and Berjaya Time Square

Malaysia is a preferred tourist destination because of the hundreds of tourist attractions and destinations spread across the country. The major attractions include historical structural buildings such as Statues and Malacca Christ Church, museums, national parks, beaches, resorts, and towers. Malaysia is also a shopping destination with varieties to offer shoppers. Medical tourism is also popular in the country with the Malaysia Health Care Travel Council reporting an arrival of 640,000 foreign patients.

## Conclusion

Based on the interview data which were collected even though social media, you tube, social media influencer have taken over the baton from main stream films in promoting various tourist destinations Film still play a key role in decision making for tourist to travel to a tourist destination and visit places which are shown in the film.

While interviewing tourist could not highlight a single you tuber or social media influencer who displayed about the tourist destination, as they could not remember even a single name. However, some of the family members could easily recognize the name of the film, which was released in 1977. Some of the tourists from Pondicherry highlighted the fact that the climax scene of Billa was shot in Langkawi. This proves the fact that film does influence tourist to visit a country and places which are showcased as part of the story or dream destination in songs.

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