GREECE: LIGHTS, CAMERA … TRAVEL!

ANALYSIS ON THE PROCESS OF ATTRACTING FOREIGN FILMMAKERS AND THE WAY THEIR FILMS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO STRENGTHEN A DESTINATION BRAND: THE CASE OF GREECE.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to get insight in the way Greece attracts foreign film producers to the country and in what way these films can contribute to the destination branding of Greece. More specifically, this paper presents the case study of the film *Mamma Mia!* which has been shot on the islands of Skopelos, Skiathos and partly on Pelion in the year 2008. The way this film can contribute to the destination promotion of Greece has been explored, as well as the reasons for Dutch tourists for wanting to visit a specific destination because of film. Surveys are held with Dutch tourists between the age of 16 and 70 in order to get insight in the image the Dutch tourist has from Greece by means of film. The results are used for recommendations to the Greek National Tourism Organisation / Ministry of Tourism on how to position Greece as an interesting filming location to attract more foreign film producers to the country. Next to that it can be used for recommendations on the promotion of films that take place in Greece, in order to attract more tourists to Greece.

Key words: destination branding, film, tourism, Greece

INTRODUCTION

Set-jetting tourism or film-induced tourism is a growing phenomenon worldwide. Set-jetting tourism is defined here as travelling to a particular destination after having seen it in a film or television show. Film is of increasing importance to a destination since it can put a place on the map and is more effective than tourism advertisements as it is viewed by millions of people. Though it is clear that film is an important and powerful image maker, the sector is often still seen as a risk because there is no guarantee of a film's success. Many destinations are now working to become 'film friendly' by developing relationships with major film studios, international and local PR companies and advertising agencies. Activities include providing relevant filming information regarding sites, tides, legal requirements and so on. Film is often considered as 'free footage' in similar terms to 'free ink' *(Beeton, 2005),* but the effort required to encourage film can be costly and time consuming. Though much of this work is time-consuming and not always successful, it is crucial to attracting film activity: as such "free footage" has a higher credibility than a tourism body promotion has. In Greece, the importance of film productions has already been recognized and in 2007 the Hellenic Film Commission Office was established in order to provide every possible service to foreign film producers to shoot their film in Greece.

Films shot in greece

Even though Greece is not perceived as an international film location of scale because there are no large film studios, its landscapes and islands have been used as the setting of many international cinematographic productions. According to the publication 'Made in Greece' *(GNTO, 2009)* about 234 international film productions have been shot in Greece between 1935 and 2009. 'Zorba the Greek' (1964) made thousands of movie-goers fall in love with Greece for life. The film follows the adventures of a British writer who moves to Crete and learns lessons in life and love from an earthy peasant named Zorba, played by Anthony Quinn. (See table 1 for a small overview of popular films that have been shot in Greece.)

Greece initiated its relationship with foreign cinema in 1957 through the American film "Boy on a Dolphin", with Sophia Loren and Alan Land. Greece was discovered by many tourists through the cinematographic films of the 50's *(Moira–Mylonopoulos–Kondoudaki, 2009:239).*

Today Greece's picturesque islands, many of them major tourist destinations, have provided the backdrop for scenes in recent films, but have not served much as major movie locations. Part of the film 'Tomb Raider 2' took place on the island of Santorini. Part

Table 1: Popular films that have been shot in Greece

Popular films shot in Greece 1957 - 2009			
FILM	**LOCATION**	**CAST**	**YEAR**
Boy on a Dolphin	Athens, Hydra	Sophia Loren, Alan Ladd	1957
Never on Sunday	Athens, Piraeus	Melina Mercouri, Jules Dassin	1960
The Guns of Navarone	Rhodes, Symi	Gregory Peck, Anthony Quinn	1961
Zorba The Greek	Crete	Anthony Quinn, Alan Bates	1964
The Greek Tycoon	Athens, Mykonos, Corfu	Anthony Quinn, Jacqueline Bisset	1978
For Your Eyes Only	Corfu, Meteora	Roger Moore, Carol Bouqet, Topol	1981
Summer Lovers	Crete, Delos, Mykonos, Santorini	Peter Gallagher, Daryl Hannah	1982
The Big Blue	Amorgos, Ios	Jean-Marc Bar, Rosanna Aquette	1988
Pascali's Island	Rhodes, Symi	Ben Kingsley, Charles Dance	1988
Shirley Valentine	Mykonos	Pauline Collins, Tom Konti, Julia McKenzie	1989
Mediterraneo	Kastelorizo	Diego Abatantuono, Claudio Bigagli	1991
Captain Corelli's Mandolin	Cephalonia	Nicolas Cage, Penelope	2001

		Cruz	
Boat Trip	Hydra	Cuba Gooding Jr, Horatio Sanz, Roger Moore	2002
The Bourne Identity	Mykonos	Matt Damon, Franka Potente	2002
Lara Croft Tomb Raider, The Cradle of Life	Santorini	Angelina Jolie, Gerard Butler	2003
The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants	Santorini	Alexis Bledel, America Ferrera	2005
Mamma Mia!	Skiathos, Skopelos, Pilio	Meryl Streep, Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth	2008
My Life in Ruins	Athens, Delphi, Ancient Olympia	Nia Vardalos, Alexis Georgoulis	2009

Source: 'Made in Greece - International Film Productions Shot in Greece' and Mr Holevas, Hellenic Film Commission Office (2009)

of the film 'The Bourne Identity' took place in Greece as well, namely on the island Mykonos *(Hadoulis, 2007).* The film Captain Corelli's Mandolin took place on Cephalonia, where an Italian soldier falls in love with a Greek girl, during the Italian occupation of Greece. The film was based on the book 'The Secret Diary of Captain Corelli' by Louis de Bernieres. Many tourists (and paparazzi magnets like Madonna) still visit the island Cephalonia because of the film. Fans can still relax with a cappuccino at one of the Corelli Cafes in the port town of Sami, where much of the filming took place. Unfortunately, most of the set was destroyed after the release of the film though. According to Dr Polyxeni Moira *(Associate professor - Department of Tourism Industry Management - Technological Education Institute of Piraeus)* the projection of the film in 2001 was reported to have a very positive impact on tourist traffic to the island, which increased by 14-16%. Numbers rose 6% the following year (2002) and in 2003 the arrivals remained the same as the previous year. In 2002, Greece was the 13th most popular destination worldwide and the eighth most popular European destination *(WTO, 2003).*

Even more significant was the rise in numbers from Britain specifically, with 2000 seeing a 12.4% increase and a 22% increase in 2001 (See appendix I). British tour operators took advantage of the film in order to promote the island as a tourist destination *(Hudson & Ritchie, 2005).* In addition, some internet sites listed Cephalonia and the settings filmed in the movie among the places of interest. But, since the film set was destroyed, there was not much left for visitors to satisfy their interests. Some entrepreneurs, nevertheless, took the opportunity to use the popularity of the film and established new businesses, giving them names inspired by the movie, such as "Captain Corelli's Bar" *(Moira, 2009).*

Fet-jetting tourism in greece: the impacts of films

Even though clearly a large amount of films have been shot in Greece, it seems that five of these film productions have been a major boost for tourism: Never on Sunday (1960), Zorba the Greek (1964), Shirley Valentine (1989), Captain Correlli's Mandolin (2001) and Mamma Mia! (2008). According to Libbie McQuillan - a senior analyst who conducted a research for the UK Film Council in order to find out about the biggest tourism attracting films - "no-brainer" feel-good films are the biggest tourism-attracting films (McQuillan, 2007). The five films that have had a strong impact on tourism arrivals to Greece, all seem to be feel-good or romantic films where the character of the film has a strong emotional contact with the landscape, which confirms the theory.

The film **'Never on Sunday'** is a feel-good romantic comedy about a prostitute who lives in the port of Piraeus in Greece, and Homer, an American tourist. The film gently submerges the viewer into the Greek culture, including dance, music and language (through the use of subtitles).[1]

The film **'Zorba the Greek'** tells the tale about an Englishman who finds he has a small inheritance on a Greek island. His joyless existence is disturbed when he meets Zorba, a middle aged Greek with a real lust for life. As he discovers the earthy pleasures of Greece, the Englishman finds his view on life changing.[2] In this film the storyline and location are closely interrelated, which is important for a film to attract tourism.

[1] Pote tin Kyriaki: Never on Sunday, IMDB, available from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054198

[2]Alexis Zorbas: Zobra the Greek, IMDB, available from: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057831

The film **'Shirley Valentine'** is a romantic comedy as well, about a middle-aged Liverpool housewife, who finds herself talking to the wall while she prepares her husband's chip 'n' egg, wondering what happened to her life. When her best friend wins an all-expenses-paid vacation to Greece for two, Shirley begins to see the world, and herself, in a different light. The storyline and location are closely interrelated for this film as well, and the viewer can relate to the character in the film. According to Sirgy and Su (2007) people purchase and use goods or services that have a user image consistent with their own self-image. This means that the greater the match between the destination image and the tourist's ideal self-image, the more likely the tourist will be motivated to visit that destination. In other words, people are motivated to hold a set of beliefs about themselves (a self-concept) and act in ways (e.g., purchase and use goods and services) to reinforce their self-concepts (Sirgy, Lee, Johar, &Tidwell, 2007) Thus, tourists will tend to select a destination where they can experience their ideal self-image. For example, someone who sees himself as a working hard to make ends meet, may choose to go to a resort with an up market image (Beeton, 2005). It is therefore important that a person can relate to the character of the film. When there is a clear image about the market a country wants to attract, this can be used in the promotional techniques.

In the romantic film **'Captain Corelli's Mandolin'**, an Italian officer falls in love with the daughter of a local Greek doctor during the Second World War. The main characters are Antonio Corelli, an Italian captain, and Pelagia, the daughter of the local physician Dr. Iannis. The characters, storyline and location are very important to each other as well. Captain Corelli's Mandolin takes place on the island of Cephalonia during the Italian and German occupation of World War II.

'Mamma Mia!' the film is another feel-good romantic comedy, where the characters of the film have an emotional relationship with the location.

In order to further discuss the impacts these films had on tourism to Greece, it is important to take a look at the international arrivals. Greece has enjoyed a continuous growth in arrivals, since the early 1950s. But, the international tourist arrivals (See appendix II) for Greece show a clear increase in 1961 after the release of the film 'Never on Sunday' (1960) of 24% from 399,438 in 1960 to 494,191 in 1961 and 597,924 in 1962. The tourism arrivals for Athens (where the film was shot) also show an increase. In 1960 when the film was released tourism arrivals were 164.287 and in 1961 these arrivals grew with 21 percent. In the year 1962 arrivals again grew with 21.5 percent and in 1963 arrivals to Athens grew with 28.5 percent. The year 1965 after the release of the film 'Zorba The Greek' also shows an increase of 29% in 1965. The year 1990 also shows a

small increase from of 9% in 1990 after the release of the film 'Shirley Valentine' (1989). After the release of 'Captain Corellis' Mandolin' in 2001, tourist arrivals to Greece show a drop of arrivals of -1% in 2002 and -4% in 2003, but the tourist arrivals to the island of Cephalonia increased by 14-16%. The decrease of total arrivals to Greece is caused by the effects of September 11, 2001 and other possible factors. Unfortunately tourism statistics for the islands of Mykonos and Crete where the other two films took place, were not available because Crete in 1963-1965 and Mykonos in 1988-1990 were not points of entry. *(Helene Katsorche, National Statistical Service of Greece, 2009)*. Of course, there are other factors that also cause the increase or decrease of arrivals, so these arrivals are not solely caused by the films, but according to secondary data and interviews with the Hellenic Film Board, Film Greece and the Greek National Tourism Organization in Amsterdam as well as in Athens these were the films that had major influence on tourism arrivals to Greece.

Table 2: Influence of films on tourism arrivals in Greece

Film	Year	Arrivals	Increase/Decrease
Never on Sunday	1960	399,438	
	1961	494,191	24%
Zorba the Greek	1964	757,495	
	1965	976,125	29%
Shirley Valentine	1989	8,540,962	
	1990	9,310,492	9%
Captain Corelli's Mandolin	2001	14,033,000	
	2002	13,917,000	-1%
Mamma Mia!	2008	18,754,593	
	2009	-	-

Source: Helene Katsorche, National Statistical Service of Greece, 2009

Films as a promotional tool for greece

While there have been studies on the economic effects of film in a region, community or country and the cooperation between cinema and the tourism sector abroad, such studies are rare in Greece. Although it is clear that films contributed to tourists arrivals (the effect of the film 'Zorba the Greek' and 'Never on Sunday' continues to be strong abroad even today), formal public authorities of tourism have not yet proceed to systematic activities in order to exploit this source of tourism*(Moira&Mylonopulos,2007:73).* After the success of the film 'My big fat Greek Wedding', which was produced by Tom Hanks (who is married to Greek-American Rita Wilson) the National Tourism Organization (GNTO) planned a unique advertising programme in the United States, in order to capitalize on the positive impacts following the success of the film 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding'. The GNTO placed advertisements in the magazine "Modern Bride" of the Conde Nast Bridal publishing group and distributed 7.2 million DVD's of the film (free of charge) with the magazine. At the same time a competition was conducted for married couples to win a prize: a trip to Greece and *A Big Fat Greek Wedding* which significantly raised Greece as a tourist destination. Later, in March 2005, the Minister of Tourism announced to create a new institution, the "one stop shop", where the filmmakers would have direct contact with all the facilities for major films to shoot in Greece *(Koumelis, 2005).* Also at the Cannes Film Festival the slogan *«Film your Myth in Greece»* was presented by the Ministry of Culture. Greece is required to make successful films and set the conditions to attract film production companies to produce similar films that will contribute positively to tourism promotion *(Moira & Mylonopoulos, 2007:73).*

Greece boasts impressive archaeological sites that have long been in demand for both television commercials and films, but strict regulations are laid out by Greek archaeologists. Because of price hikes following the adoption of the euro, Greece has had a hard time competing with neighboring Balkan and eastern European countries which can combine lower production costs with similar landscapes for location shots.

Mr Markos Holevas, director of the Hellenic Film Commission states that in the 1980s, the word in Hollywood was that Greece was an unwelcoming place to shoot a film. "Now there is a desire to change things... the Greek state has realized (the benefits) and wants to promote Greece through film... and Tom Hanks (producer of *Mamma Mia!*) with Rita Wilson (Tom Hanks' wife) were the first to respond to this policy." *(Hadoulis, 2007).*

In the case of the film 'Captain Corellis'Mandolin', the set was totally destroyed after the shooting of the film, and there was nothing left for visitors to see. According to Mr Kavelievatos who owns a photo shop that sells photographs from the making of the film in Cephalonia, not enough was done to promote the filming of Captain Corelli's Mandolin in Cephalonia. There was no cooperation between the tourism industry the locals and the film industry *(Hudson & Ritsie, 2005).* However, cooperation between the tourism industry and film producers is very important, since the positive impacts of set-jetting tourism can be strengthened (and become more sustainable) by means of the right destination marketing activities (See appendix III).

CASE MAMMA MIA! THE 'MAMMA MIA EFFECT'

This case study will explore the impacts of the film 'Mamma Mia!' on tourism in order to get insight in the promotional opportunities of this specific film, as it is the latest tourism-attracting film that takes place in Greece. The current impacts and promotion of the film are analyzed as well as the influence of 'Mamma Mia!' on the Dutch market (and important market for Greece). Primary data was collected by means of interviewing local travel agents, hotels and residents in Skopelos, Skiathos and Pelion. Secondary data was collected about the impacts of the film as well.

Mamma Mia!

'Mamma Mia!' tells the tale of a young woman who is a bride-to-be and is trying to find her real father. The story is set on the small Greek island Kalokairi (which means "summer" in Greek). On the evening of her wedding she brings three men from her mother's past back to the Greek island they visited over two decades ago, in order to find out who her real father is. *Mamma Mia!* is based on the songs of ABBA.

The film *Mamma Mia!* was shot on three islands in Greece, namely Pelion, Skiathos and Skopelos. Kalokairi, the island in the 'Mamma Mia!' film is actually Skopelos. Skopelos was officially nominated in 1997 as "The Green and Blue Island" from the Biopolitics International Organization (whose aim is to raise awareness of current environmental problems, and to accelerate the implementation of new and more effective approaches to safeguarding the earth for the generations to come). With an area of 95 km², Skopelos is the largest island of the Sporades group of islands. However, Skopelos does not have an airport, so visitors need to fly to Skiathos, then take an hour-long ferry to Skopelos. In 1978 the town of Skopelos was honored by President of Greece Konstantinos Tsatsos as a

Traditional Settlement of Outstanding Beauty. This is the Greek equivalent of a site of Outstanding Architectural Inheritance.

The impacts of 'Mamma Mia!' on tourism

Several sources (local hotels/travel agents) bring forward that 'Mamma Mia!' already had a major impact on tourism in Greece. However, there are no tourism statistics available yet at this point. It is still too early to tell the change in arrivals as the film was released in 2008, but according to interviews held with hotels and local travel agents on the islands of Skopelos, Skiathos and Pelion, the interest in the islands have increased since the release of the film 'Mamma Mia!'. The three islands were constantly visited by press at the time of filming (August-September 2007). Journalists from all over the world visited Greece for the international press junket where the actors shared with them - amongst others - the experience of shooting in Greece and being part of "such a great movie". Also, CNN's monthly movie show "The Screening Room" has visited Greece to report on the big musical blockbuster "Mamma Mia!"[3]. The film benefited from this promotion from the international media and the natural landscape of the Aegean Sea, incredible beaches, closed coves, little ports, and green banks of Skopelos were viewed by some 30 million viewers around the world, in 160 cities and in eight languages *(Moira, Mylonopoulos & Kondoudaki, 2009:241).*

Appendix IV gives an overview of films that have grossed over $200,000,000 at the box office during their theatrical runs. All amounts are in USA dollars and only include theatrical box office receipts (movie ticket sales) and do not include video rentals, television rights and other revenues. Here it shows that 'Mamma Mia!' is #42 on the list, and already grossed a total of $601,204,210 which would be impossible to reach with any other form of promotion. As stated before, it is still too early to notice the actual changes in tourism arrivals, but it is clear that 'Mamma Mia!' operates as magnet for Greece. After the release of the film reservations for Skiathos and Skopelos increased by 10% in 2009 *(Markopoulos, 2009).*

But, the first positive changes in tourist traffic to Skopelos were already felt in the summer of 2008. The Mayor of the island reported that the tourist arrivals increased in August by 5% compared to the respective period in 2007. Various entrepreneurs sought to

[3] Hellenic Film Commission Office, "The Screening Room of CNN visits Greece to report on Mamma Mia!", 2009, available from: http://www.hfco.gr/C9A48BD5.en.aspx

take advantage of the film's popularity, such as the recent opening of a coffee shop with the name 'Mamma Mia' (*(Moira, Mylonopoulos & Kondoudaki, 2009:241-242).*

The mayor of Skopelos, Mr Christos Vasiloudi states that the film *Mamma Mia!* has such an impact that it is called 'The Mamma Mia! Effect'. "People call in all the time asking how they can get to our *Mamma Mia!* paradise." *(Vasiloudi, 2008).*

The Greek National Tourism in cooperation with the Hellenic Association of Travel and Tourism Agencies (HATTA) invited Australian tour operators and journalists to visit Greece, in October 2008. This cooperation was initiated in order to follow the "traces" of the movie in search of new tourist destinations in Pelion, Skiathos and Skopelos (*Moira, Mylonopoulos & Kondoudaki, 2009:241).*

According to interviews held with hotels, local travel agents and residents in Skopelos, *Mamma Mia!* already had a clear impact on tourism to Skopelos. Mr Yiannis Chatzitrakosas, creator of SkopelosWeb states that more people are interested in information about the Greek island and many of the people who ask him for information after having seen 'Mamma Mia!' have actually visited Skopelos since. Mr Chatzitrakosas believes Skopelos still remains and will remain a traditional Greek island because it is not well reachable for tourists. *(Interview with Mr Chatzitrakosas, 2009).* This is also what attracted the film producers to shoot in Skopelos. The GoSkopelos team (www.goskopelos.com) also state that *Mamma Mia!* has already shown its influence since a lot more 'new' people have visited the island over the past two years. *(Interview with the GoSkopelos team, 2009)*. However, since there are no statistics available yet it is difficult to get an insight on the actual changes.

'Mamma Mia!' has already surpassed the famous film 'Titanic' to become the highest earning film that was ever released in the United Kingdom. For this reason Skopelos is struggling to keep up with outside interest and odd requests from tourists. A local travel agent, Mahi Drossou, says he had requests from people in England, Hungary, Australia, asking whether they can marry in Skopelos, hold champagne parties or buy land in Skopelos. One English couple wondered if they could book the beach that features in the film for a private wedding *(Drossou, 2008).*

'Mamma Mia!' as a promotional tool

According to interviews held, local travel agents and hotels in Skopelos are not doing much about the promotion of the film and location themselves. Other than the "Mamma Mia café", a couple of posters around the waterfront and websites where you can read

about the "Mamma Mia Island", there is no promotional campaign *(Kalina, 2008).* Mr Yiannis Chatzitrakosas (creator of Skopelos Web) says the most important thing is word of mouth publicity. This means that people visit the island and then tell their friends and family about it. Other than that, people talk about the film and when they go on the internet to search for the "Mamma Mia Island" they find out that it is Skopelos that hosts the majority of the Greek shots. It could be said that this is a branding issue, as film tourists are inspired by destination marketing activities. Mr Yiannis Chatzitrakosas used the title Mamma Mia island himself, to promote the island by means of Google ads. He also states that it is not allowed by law to use the title of the film to open up a business or shop, but it can be used as a promotion tool. *(Interview Mr Chatzitrakosas, 2009).* The team of GoSkopelos (www.goskopelos.com) is preparing a great review for *Mamma Mia!* and Skopelos and a series of e-mail marketing will include *Mamma Mia!* references *(Interview GoSkopelos Team, 2009*..

Skopelos also has many small hotels who do not see many influences from the film. Mrs Rodopoulos Paikos (Manager from the Adrina Beach Hotel in Skopelos) states they are a very small hotel with 57 rooms and they have 85% repeaters every year since they began operating in 1992. For this reason their business is not a hotel that will be affected from the 'Mamma Mia!' film or the credit crunch. *(Interview R. Paikos, 2009)*.

Mr Panos Andritsopoulos from the Hotel Association in Skiathos believes 'Mamma Mia!' will help in the promotion of the island and will ultimately attract more tourists. In order to promote 'Mamma Mia!' and the location Skiathos, the municipality of Skiathos takes part in various exhibitions worldwide *(Interview P. Andritsopoulos, 2009).*

Mrs Kostantina Saraidari from Skopelos Weddings would like to spread the holiday season (that means more accommodation, more restaurants, more income for the locals etcetera) and notify tourists that they can do more interesting things such as a sightseeing (there are interesting museums, libraries, many monasteries) and of course getting married and spend their honeymoon in Skopelos. She states that the influence of 'Mamma Mia!' is huge. Skopelos is not so known around the world as Mykonos and Santorini (they are very popular for many reasons). Skopelos belongs to a complex of islands called Sporades (7 of them) and they are blessed by mother nature because it is covered from a variation of trees. Because of the film the reaction was very quick. Many people around the world (Asia, Africa, Australia, USA) are willing and wishing to perform their wedding in Skopelos. Thanks to 'Mamma Mia' the film Skopelos Weddings have many more requests.

Mrs Kostantina Saraidari states that up until now, almost nothing was done about the promotion of the film and the island. Everything just happened very quickly. Not even the

website was updated in order to be more informative, with many pictures and locations. Up until now no advantage has been taken of the huge film success. The only way in which the film was used as a promotional tool is that Skopelos Weddings convinced the Mayor of the island to perform civil weddings on the beach, on boats or in private villas, as people are asking for specific locations from the 'Mamma Mia!' scenes. Before 'Mamma Mia!' it was not possible in Greece to perform civil weddings on a boat or on the beach. This was only possible in the City Hall *(Interview K. Saraidari, 2009)*.

The use of filmed material for promotional purposes of the locations it took place (in this case Skiathos, Skopelos and Pelion) is regulated by private agreements between the film-producer and the local authorities. This operation does not require a specific law allowing it to happen. Having said that, in Greece "the Government DOES NOT collaborate with the private sector". So, any and all deals regarding this happen on a "case by case" basis *(Interview C. A. Giotis, 2009)*.

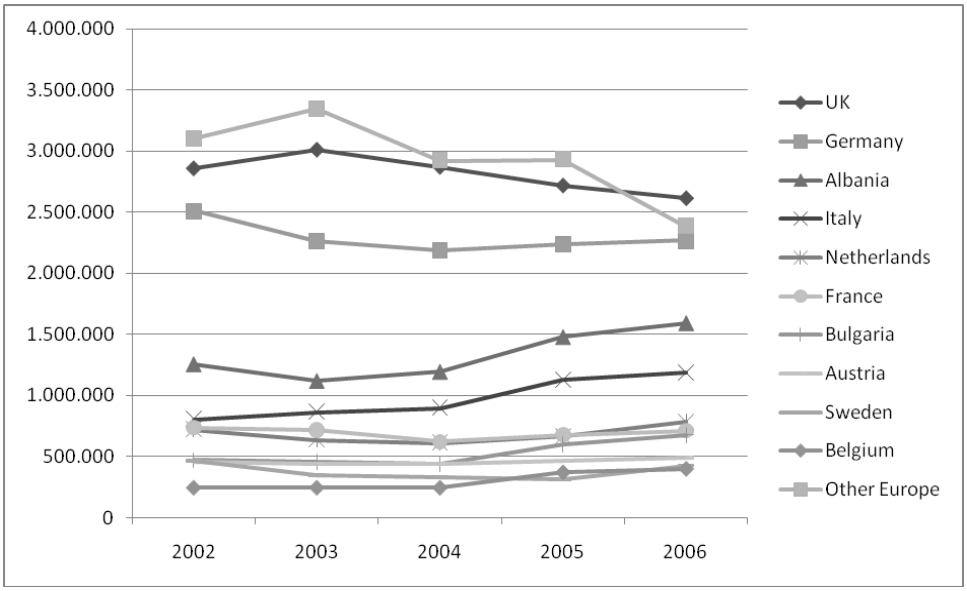
Mr Holevas (Managing Director – Hellenic Film Commission) states that is still too early to know the actual influences of the film 'Mamma Mia!'. However, in general it can be concluded from the above mentioned sources that interest in Greece – and especially Skiathos and Skopelos – has increased.

The 'Mamma Mia!' effect on the Dutch market

The Netherlands is an important market for Greece. More than 84% of all inbound tourists originate in Western and Eastern Europe and in 2006 the Netherlands was number five on the list of leading source markets for inbound arrivals to Greece from Europe. Greece, however, is facing stiff competition from other (and in some cases, lower-priced) destinations (i.e. Turkey) offered by tour operators and, of course, the Internet, which gives consumers a wider choice of holiday hot spots than ever before. Even though Greece enjoys mild temperatures during most of the year, the majority of tourists arrive in the months July and August, when families have time off. Greece is perceived as a sun-sea destination which the government is trying to overcome. They are targeting niche markets (special interest, conventions, seniors), developing new packages and promoting the country as a year-round destination.[4]

[4] "Travel and Tourism – Greece" Mintel International Group Ltd, May 2008

Figure 1: Leading source markets for inbound arrivals to Greece from Europe

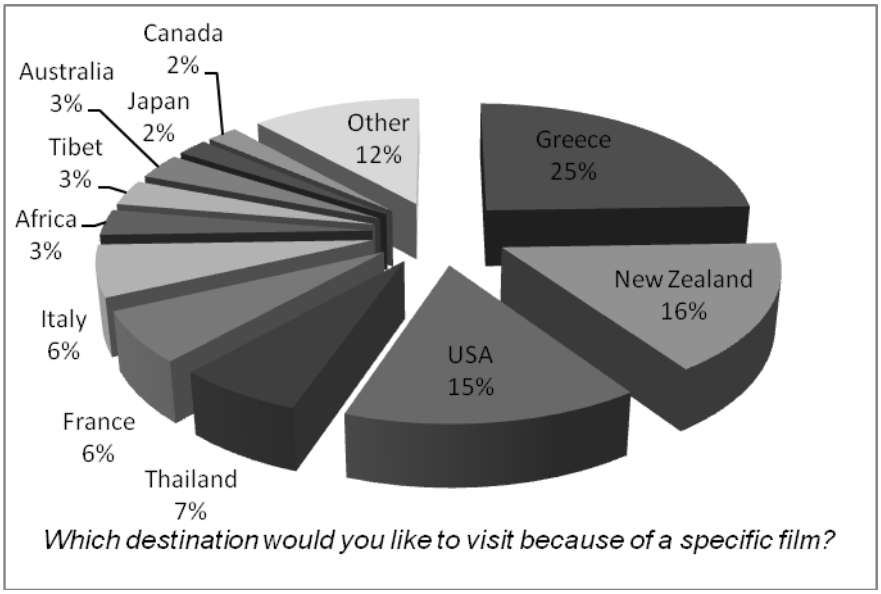


Author: Romy Assadourian, 2009 (Source: UNWTO; National Statistical Service of Greece; Mintel, 2008) Note: for 2002-04, figures have been rounded.

In 2007 Greece was number seven on the list of most visited foreign destinations for The Netherlands *(TNS Nipo)*. In order to get insight in the image the Dutch tourist has from Greece, because of film (and especially the latest film 'Mamma Mia!'), surveys were held with a sample of 108 (potential) tourists between the age of 16 and 70. Next to that, the reasons for visiting a destination because of a specific film were explored. From the 108 respondents, 54 percent was female and 46 percent was male. It must be taken into account though that the surveys were partly distributed amongst 'Mamma Mia fans' via web 2.0 on a social networking website and 61 percent of the respondents did see the film 'Mamma Mia!'. The largest amount of respondents were either between the age of 16-24 (43 percent) or 41-55 (34 percent). This is because the film 'Mamma Mia!' is especially interesting for those two age groups as they can both relate to the story. The first age group of 16-24 can relate to the daughter Sophie (Amanda Seyfried) in the film, and the second age group of 41-55 can relate to mother Donna (Meryl Streep). The reason that web-based surveys were used is because these surveys tend to draw more honest responses than other types of surveys *(Rubin, 2000)*. Besides that, the website that was used for this survey provides statistical results of the survey on a daily basis.

In the first part of the survey the respondents were asked whether they have ever visited a destination because of a specific film they had seen. The reasons for visiting this destination are questioned as well as the destinations they would still like to visit because of a certain film. The second part of the survey continues with questions about the film 'Mamma Mia!' and the associations with the film. The survey then continues with questions about Greece, the image they have and the reasons they would visit the country. The last part of the survey collected personal details about the characteristics of the respondents (sex and age).

Figure 2: Survey results on film destinations



The results from the surveys show that 15 percent of respondents have ever visited a destination because of a specific film they had seen. The countries that were visited by these 15 percent were Thailand, Greece, the USA, Austria, France or New Zealand. Nearly all respondents (84 percent) would like to visit a destination because of a specific film they have seen. It could be said that seeing a film can create stronger emotional attachment to a place, which leads to the intention of further exploration of the destination. With 25 percent, Greece has the largest share of destinations that people would like to visit due to a film, followed by New Zealand with 16 percent and the United States with 15 percent. Though it must be kept in mind that the surveys were partly distributed amongst 'Mamma Mia' fans.

The films that were indicated most as a reason for wanting to visit these countries were *Mamma Mia!*, *The Lord of the Rings, The Beach* and *The Italian Job.*

When respondents were asked for the reasons for wanting to visit this destination because of the film it came to the fore that many respondents seek out destination with an 'extraordinary' landscape which they have seen in film, followed by wanting to follow the footsteps of the actors, the romantic atmosphere of the film and because of the buildings shown in the film. This confirms the theory that films are of increasing importance to a destination. Film is a very strong medium with which people can identify themselves with. Tourists seem to be motivated to visit a destination through both push and pull factors . Next to these factors tourists are inspired by destination marketing activities which show the importance of destination marketing organizations when it comes to promoting a country through film. It seems that "no-brainer" feel good films have the biggest pull for tourists. It is important that the landscape is in the foreground of the film and not just used as a backdrop. Also, the character of the film needs to have a strong emotional relationship with the landscape. Besides this, it is important a film contains "icons". This could be a part of the film, an actor or an object people relate to the location in the film, which they would then like to visit. People need to identify with this icon. A good example of this is the blue door - Hugh Grant's house - in 'Notting Hill' or the Devil's tower national monument in the film 'Close Encounter of the Third Kind'. *(Hudson and Ritchie, 2005; Bolan and Davidson, 2005; Macionis, 2004).*

When looking at the case of the film 'Mamma Mia!' it becomes clear that associations with the film are different between the respondents who did see the film and respondents who did not. The majority of the respondents who actually saw the film could associate it with Greece. However, the ones that did not see the film associated it with either Sweden (because of Abba) or Italy (because of the Italian pronunciation "Mamma Mia". The thoughts that come to mind when respondents think about the film are most of all "fun/happiness", "Abba", "Music/songs", and "Greece". However, it appears that respondents who did see the film mostly associate it with fun and Greece, and respondents who did not associate it with Abba and music. Therefore it could be said that for people to draw the link between the film 'Mamma Mia!' and Greece the tourism board needs to anticipate on the film by developing promotional material aligned with the film. By creating media coverage (potential) tourists who did not see the film could also draw the link between the two and this way more tourists could be attracted.

Figure 3: Reasons on wanting to visit a destination because of film

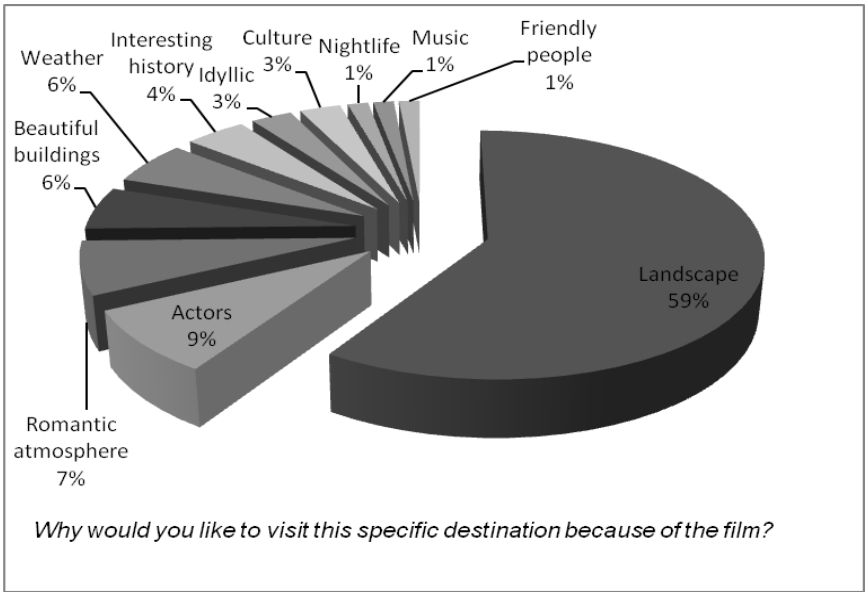
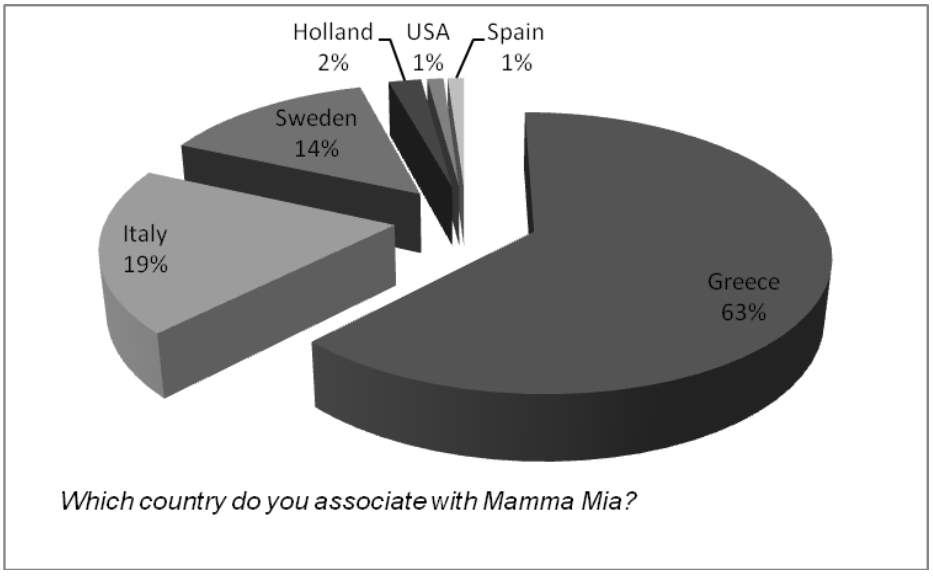
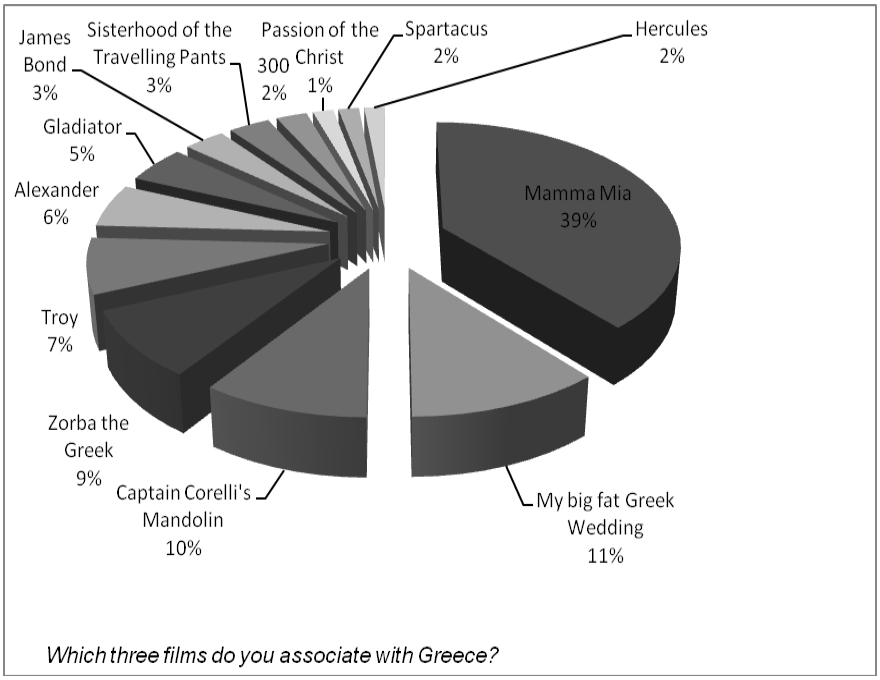


Figure 4: Countries associated with 'Mamma Mia!'



From all respondents, sixty percent know they saw a film that was shot in Greece. When they were asked which film they saw, the following films came to the fore:

Figure 5: Films associated with Greece



When respondents were asked to name three films they associate with Greece, the most named films were 'Mamma Mia!', 'My big fat Greek Wedding', 'Captain Corelli's Mandolin', 'Zorba the Greek', and 'Troy'. What is most significant is that respondents associate Troy, My big fat Greek Wedding, Alexander, 300 and the Gladiator with Greece, even though those films were not shot in Greece. This means that places referred to - but not seen - in a film can still capitalize on the film's imaging power. With the right use of destination marketing activities, the Greek National Tourism Organization could anticipate on these films. When looking at the image respondents have of Greece at this point, sun/sea/beach is what comes up the most. This is followed by "food" and "ancient Greece". It appears that 'Mamma Mia' was only named by two percent of the respondents. Destination marketing is needed in order for this percentage to grow. The main activities respondents did in Greece (from the 54 percent of respondents who have ever been to Greece) are cultural sightseeing (34 percent) and shopping (22 percent). Nineteen percent of respondents mostly did other things, which were mainly relaxing and tanning on the beach, and especially for the age group 16-24 partying and nightlife.

However, it must be taken into account that the activities done in Greece do not per se say anything about the reason they visited Greece. The longer people stay in a destination, the more likely they are to engage in activities that have nothing to do with their reason for visiting the destination in the first place *(McKercher, 2006).* For this reason respondents were asked to name the activities that actually played a role in deciding going to Greece. Results show that the main reason for visiting Greece was for the beach (41 percent) and cultural sightseeing (38 percent). Therefore these are the two main items that should be used in the promotion of films.

Bolan and Davidson (2005) analyzed the influence of media on destination choice of tourists. Here the majority (67 percent) stated that media has been a motivating factor in making their choice of destination. Therefore the 108 Dutch respondents between the age of 16 and 70 were asked the question what induced their interest in Greece. In turned out that tips from family and friends are the most persuasive factor (32 percent), followed by the media with 23 percent. Travel agents were the least influential factor according to this survey. Respondents also indicated that their favorite way of booking a holiday is by arranging everything themselves through the internet (35 percent). The internet is the most popular medium and travel agents seem to have become less important.

Sixty-five percent of respondents would like to visit Greece somewhere between now and four years time, 16 percent would not and 19 percent is not sure yet. It is significant that at this point five percent of respondents who would like to visit Greece says it is because of 'Mamma Mia!' However the main reason for respondents wanting to visit Greece is because they think it is a beautiful country. Since 23 percent of respondents indicated that media induced their interest in Greece it is assumed that together with tips from family and friends this is the main reason for people believing it is a beautiful country. The main reason for respondents not wanting to visit Greece is because they have already been there and would first like to see other countries. Even though there is only so much you can do, a good branding strategy for Greece could ensure repeat visitors.

CONCLUSION

Though Greece's picturesque islands have been used as a backdrop in many films, few of them have served as major film locations. No-brainer feel-good films where the character of the films has a close connection to the landscape, are the biggest tourism-attractors. This can be confirmed when looking at the five films that had the most impact on tourism to Greece. When looking at the results of the survey it can be said that respondents

especially are “specific film-tourists” as was described by Macionis (2004): those who specifically seek out places they have seen in film.

Even though the importance of film has been recognized in Greece, formal public authorities have not yet proceeded to systematic steps to actually exploit this type of tourism. The case ‘*Captain Corelli’s Mandolin’* has been a missed chance, because no actions were taken to promote the island after the filming and besides, the whole film set was destroyed afterwards which meant there was nothing left for visitors to see. There was no cooperation between the tourism industry and film industry even though this is very important. The problem with Greece is that they have a hard time competing with neighboring countries due to the production costs and the strict regulations set out by archeologists. Therefore it is not possible (or at least it is difficult) for producers to shoot in every area in Greece. By using the right destination marketing activities/promoting strategies tourism arrivals could be spread out over the season and become more sustainable. However, for the case ‘*Mamma Mia’* which obviously did have a great impact on tourism to Greece and especially the island Skopelos where most of the film was shot, no real promotional activities have taken place by the tourism industry since the release of the film. Skopelos is now struggling to keep up with outside interest, but without promotional activities these impacts will not be long term.

From surveys held with (potential) Dutch tourists between the age of 16 and 70 it can be said that nearly all respondents would like to visit a destination because of a specific film, yet only 15 percent has actually done it. The reasons for such a big gap are unfortunately not clear though. It came to the fore that many respondents seek out destination with an ‘extraordinary’ landscape which they have seen in film, followed by wanting to follow the footsteps of the actors, the romantic atmosphere of the film and because of the buildings shown in the film. Associations with the film are different between the respondents who did see the film and respondents who did not. Respondents who did not see the film could not draw the link between the film and Greece. However, when looking at the image in mind when it comes to Greece, it appears that there is no actual difference noticed between respondents who did and did not see the film. This does not mean that film is useless for Greece however. When respondents were asked if they would like to visit Greece between now and four years time, the majority of respondents who saw the film said yes, as opposed to the respondents who did not see the film. For people to draw the link between the film ‘Mamma Mia!’ and Greece the tourism board needs to anticipate on the film by developing promotional material aligned with the film.

Another result from the survey showed that films associated with Greece are – besides ‘*Mamma Mia!’, ‘Captain Corelli’s Mandolin’,* etcetera, are also ‘*Troy’, ‘Alexander’, ‘300’*

and '*My big fat Greek Wedding'* which were not shot in Greece. This means that places referred to - but not seen - in a film can still capitalize on the film's imaging power. With the right use of destination marketing activities, the Greek National Tourism Organization could anticipate on these films. The main items that should be used when promoting films are the beach and cultural buildings as these are the main reasons for people visiting Greece. The results from the survey furthermore indicate that the main reason for people *not* wanting to visit Greece is because they have already been there. Though there is only so much you can do, a good branding strategy for Greece could ensure repeat visitors.

Appendices

Appendix I Visitor arrivals to Cephalonia (1999-2004)

Origin of arrivals	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*
Austria	2998	2453	3186	2823	2314	2260
Czech Republic	2221	2608	2310	1781	4651	4348
Germany	1664	1008	1050	942	742	–
Ireland	–	–	–	–	2860	3212
Italy	–	–	–	–	132	–
Netherlands	1062	1479	1210	1059	1050	797
Slovenia	563	600	712	756	690	744
Sweden	3909	4589	4271	2863	1762	–
Denmark	1418	3174	1964	–	–	–
Norway	–	1558	1397	–	–	–
Finland	1766	2470	–	–	–	–
United Kingdom	104412	117375	143063	157171	154782	143461
Increase/Decrease	–	**+12.4%**	**+22%**	**+10%**	**(1.52%)**	**(7.31%)**
Other	–	–	–	1328	–	–
TOTAL	120013	137314	159163	168723	168983	154822
Increase/Decrease		+14%	+16%	+6%	+0.15%	(8.88%)

Hudson and Brent Ritchie, 2005

Appendix II: Tourism arrivals Greece 1950 - 2008

Tourism arrivals Greece during the period 1950 - 2008		
YEAR	**ARRIVALS**	**Increase/Decrease**
1950	33,333	-
1951	40,568	22%
1952	68,184	68%
1953	94,410	38%
1954	157,618	67%
1955	195,852	24%
1956	218,301	11%
1957	261,738	20%
1958	276,534	6%
1959	339,802	23%
1960	399,438	18%
1961	494,191	24%
1962	597,924	21%
1963	741,193	24%

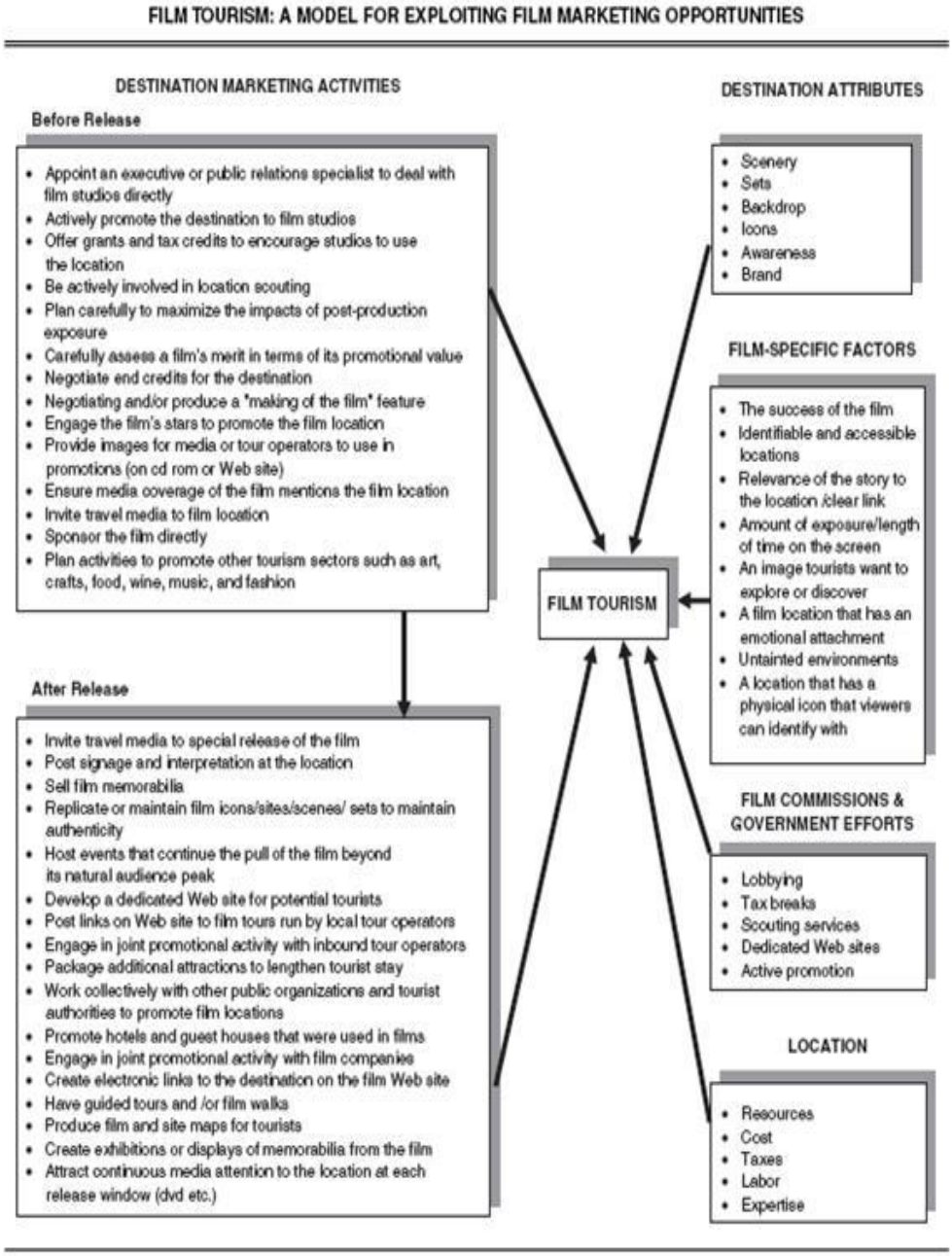
Tourism arrivals Greece during the period 1950 - 2008		
YEAR	**ARRIVALS**	**Increase/Decrease**
1964	757,495	2%
1965	976,125	29%
1966	1,131,730	16%
1967	996,473	-12%
1968	1,017,621	2%
1969	1,305,951	28%
1970	1,609,210	23%
1971	2,257,994	40%
1972	2,731,587	21%
1973	3,177,682	16%
1974	2,188,304	-31%
1975	3,172,968	45%
1976	4,243,563	34%
1977	4,597,354	8%
1978	5,081,033	11%
1979	5,798,360	14%

Tourism arrivals Greece during the period 1950 - 2008		
YEAR	**ARRIVALS**	**Increase/Decrease**
1980	5,271,115	-9%
1981	5,577,109	6%
1982	5,463,060	-2%
1983	5,258,372	-4%
1984	6,027,266	15%
1985	7,039,428	17%
1986	7,339,015	4%
1987	8,053,052	10%
1988	8,351,182	4%
1989	8,540,962	2%
1990	9,310,492	9%
1991	8,271,258	-11%
1992	9,756,012	18%
1993	9,913,267	2%
1994	11,301,722	14%
1995	10,658,114	-6%

Tourism arrivals Greece during the period 1950 - 2008		
YEAR	**ARRIVALS**	**Increase/Decrease**
1996	9,782,061	-8%
1997	10,588,489	8%
1998	11,363,822	7%
1999	10,970,665	-3%
2000	12,500,000	14%
2001	14,033,000	12%
2002	13,917,000	-1%
2003	13,313,000	-4%
2004	14,276,000	7%
2005	15,005,000	5%
2006	16,039,000	7%
2007	17,283,910	8%
2008	18,754,593	9%

Greek National Tourism Organization and National Statistical Service of Greece
(Note: for 2000 – 2006 figures have been rounded).

Appendix III: Film tourism: A model for exploiting film marketing opportunities



Simon Hudson and J.R. Brent Ritchie, Promoting Destinations via Film Tourism: An Empirical Identification of Supporting Marketing Initiatives, 2006

Appendix IV : Overview of the world's largest box office films according to worldwide Gross

IMDB, updated 31 March 2009

Number	Film	Year of release	Worldwide gross
1.	Titanic	1997	$1,835,300,000
2.	The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	2003	$1,129,219,252
3.	Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest	2006	$1,060,332,628
4.	The Dark Knight	2008	$997,316,061
5.	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	2001	$968,657,891
6.	Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	2007	$958,404,152
7.	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	2007	$937,000,866
8.	Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace	1999	$922,379,000
9.	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	2002	$921,600,000
10.	Jurassic Park	1993	$919,700,000
11.	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	2005	$892,194,397
12.	Spider-Man 3	2007	$885,430,303
13.	Shrek 2	2004	$880,871,036

14.	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	2002	$866,300,000
15.	Finding Nemo	2003	$865,000,000
16.	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	2001	$860,700,000
17.	Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith	2005	$848,462,555
18.	Independence Day	1996	$811,200,000
19.	Spider-Man	2002	$806,700,000
20.	Star Wars	1977	$797,900,000
21.	Shrek the Third	2007	$791,106,665
22.	Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	2004	$789,458,727
23.	Spider-Man 2	2004	$783,577,893
24.	The Lion King	1994	$783,400,000
25.	Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull	2008	$783,011,114
26.	The Da Vinci Code	2006	$757,236,138
27.	E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial	1982	$756,700,000
28.	The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	2005	$738,809,845
29.	The Matrix Reloaded	2003	$735,600,000
30.	Transformers	2007	$700,759,914

31.	Forrest Gump	1994	$679,400,000
32.	The Sixth Sense	1999	$661,500,000
33.	Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl	2003	$653,200,000
34.	Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones	2002	$648,200,000
35.	Kung Fu Panda	2008	$633,395,021
36.	The Incredibles	2004	$624,037,578
37.	Ice Age: The Meltdown	2006	$623,829,763
38.	Hancock	2008	$623,546,274
39.	Ratatouille	2007	$615,935,493
40.	The Lost World: Jurassic Park	1997	$614,300,000
41.	The Passion of the Christ	2004	$604,370,943
42.	Mamma Mia!	2008	$601,204,210
43.	Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	2008	$591,382,968
44.	War of the Worlds	2005	$591,377,056
45.	Casino Royale	2006	$587,607,184
46.	Men in Black	1997	$587,200,000
47.	I Am Legend	2007	$583,986,216

48.	Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi	1983	$572,700,000
49.	Iron Man	2008	$571,827,600

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