The Production and Consumption of Experience: Inter-Asian Responses to Small Screen Tourism in Korea

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Goal and objectives of the dissertation

The primary aim of this research is to conceptually develop and empirically examine the underlying mechanisms and structures through which audiences perceive/experience transnational TV drama(s) and the ways in which these may influence tourists' experiences when they become screen tourists at the filmed locations in the inter-Asian dimension. The following six main objectives are developed in order to achieve the aim of the study:

1. To identify key attributes, the so-called production values of transnational TV drama production and consumption
2. To identify the dimensions of audience involvement in the context of screen tourism associated with transnational TV drama
3. To examine how the production side constructs, contextualises, and guides audience consumption and in turn influences

tourists' experiences when they visit filmed locations

4. To develop an integrated framework for modelling the influence of transnational TV drama production and consumption on screen tourism experiences

5. To empirically examine the structural relationships of the integrated framework of production values and the audience involvement and the ways in which these viewing experiences may influence touristic experiences at screen tourism destinations

6. To examine whether there are cross-cultural differences by nationalities in terms of audience's viewing experiences with the programme and screen tourism experience.

Methodology

Mixed methods were adopted with preliminary qualitative driven in-depth interviews and a following up quantitative questionnaire survey. As a first stage of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with the production team of

Daejanggeum, known in English *Jewel in the Palace*, one of the most successful and popular Korean TV dramas in Asia and beyond. The interviewees included director, producer, camera director, lighting director, set director and writer, and the main purpose of the interviews was to identify key elements of production values of the programme for the production and consumption. Thereafter, quantitative structured questionnaire survey as a hypothesis testing was undertaken in order to investigate the causal relationships between multi-variables including level of exposure, production values, audience involvement, on-site screen tourism experiences and post-visit screen tourists' behaviour.

Results

Audiences as potential tourists, their previous viewing experiences, and touristic appeal of textual, visual and aural representations of a transnational TV drama are themselves complex and cannot be reduced to some single motif. As conceptually and empirically examined in this study, level of exposure, production values, and audience involvement played a crucial role in influencing the level of screen tourism experiences at screen tourism destinations. Of the two dimensions of production values, *Story and Character* is the stronger vehicle provoking more positive screen tourism experiences. This includes: educational and moral messages; attractiveness of main characters; excellent overall casting; outstanding performances of the actors; interesting content; originality of story (lines); enhanced emotional involvement and identification; structure of narrative and plot; topicality; and embedded meanings in certain parts of the set.

Regarding audience involvement, *behavioural and emotional involvement* is more closely tied to the screen tourism experiences. Especially, the constructs of emotional engagement and involvement are more likely to provoke audience's behavioural intention to visit the filmed locations of the programme. However, cognitive and critical reflection of audience involvement did not emerge as a distinct dimension, which indicates that cognitively oriented audience involvement including

cognitive interaction and critical reflection was not considered as one of the major vehicles to construct and influence viewing experiences of a TV drama as well as on-site screen tourism experiences.

Furthermore, the findings suggested that personal emotional engagement with a TV drama consumption associated with familiarity, empathy, identification, and reflection would allow greater personalised symbolic meanings to the beholders of the gaze. Such symbolic meanings construct and contextualise symbolic and subjective touristic experiences. This in turn results in screen tourism experiences being appreciated as a memory structure and various symbolic dimensions of these spaces as ritual places through the complex imaginative and emotional involvement of audiences. Thus, screen tourists attempted to remember and experience how they were emotionally and behaviourally touched by the story and characters and other production values in the mediated reality. Also, they wanted to confirm iconic parts or everything of what was depicted on the screen through their eyes and camera lenses, as opposed to merely gazing at the site/sight.

Finally, it was also empirically supported that the level of on-site screen tourism experiences was an immediate antecedent of post-visit screen tourists' behaviour including recommendation, re-visit intention and satisfaction. To some extent, local audiences of each country (e.g. China, Japan, Taiwan and Thailand) claimed different viewing experiences and screen tourism experiences.

Theoretical conclusions

This study not only attempted to develop and examine an integrated model for the effects of transnational TV drama production and consumption on tourists' experiences at screen tourism destinations, but also offered empirical support for the theoretical proposition that measurements of each construct including production values, audience involvement, on-site screen tourism experiences, and post-visit screen tourists' behaviour satisfactorily established the construct validity and reliability. The study contributed to bridging the concept

of audience involvement and production values to screen tourism destinations and its associated on-site touristic experiences. Another key theoretical contribution of this study is to have made an initial effort to investigate the effects of inter-Asian audience viewing experiences on screen tourism experiences at the filmed locations of a Korean popular TV drama, given the relative lack of attention to non-Western and non-English popular TV production, consumption, and tourism within the screen tourism arena. Furthermore, the study initiated to conduct a cross-cultural or cross-national comparative research in the context of screen tourism in the inter-Asian dimension.

Practical application of the dissertation

The complex underlying mechanisms and structures between previous viewing experiences of media programme and screen tourism provide reasons to why industry practitioners should necessitate initialising co-operation of film, TV and tourism sectors for the opportunity of screen tourism in order to prevent an ad-hoc, unplanned and opportunistic way of screen tourism. In order to successfully transform filmed locations to screen tourism destinations for tourism stakeholders who have an interest in screen tourism development, it is essential for regional and local (government) bodies to recognise that sound screen tourism planning and development programme need to be initiated during the screen product's lifecycle, from pre-release, to theatrical release, to DVD release. This would require the participation of film makers, tourism agencies and operators, destination marketers, and regional and/or local bodies. Furthermore, the importance of local community's support and involvement should not be ignored, because they lead to form the basis of all tourism experiences either directly or indirectly. For screen tourism destinations managers, it is important to note that emotion, memory, nostalgia and attachment are fundamental to the practice of screen tourism. Thus, it would be beneficial for them to identify symbolically and emotionally meaningful icons and attractions and their meanings in the context of the media programme associated with their locations as well as to offer their

destinations' provision and supply of such anticipated touristic experiences.

Content of the dissertation

Abstract of chapter one

This opening chapter one provides general introduction to the thesis.

Abstract of chapter two

Chapter two provides a conceptual picture of the intermingled relationships between tourism, contemporary society, the media, and the visual culture. It draws on insights into the critical discussions on the cultural media imperialism, cultural proximity and active audience reception that draw attention to international flow of cultural information and imagery and its influence in media consumption of international audiences. It also demonstrates the powerful role of media participation in particular, television in everyday life as a major cultural and social practice and as a means of the extraordinary intertwining of tourist practices and cultural texts in contemporary society. Finally, it presents a productive approach to possibly unveil the relationships between tourism and the transnational media and its impacts on tourist experience and tourism itself. More specifically, these relationships are highlighted and exemplified in the context of screen tourism phenomenon.

Abstract of chapter three

Chapter three provides insights into the underlying mechanisms and structures of transnational popular media production and consumption and attempts to better understand the relationships between such audience viewing experience and its associated screen tourism. As majority of screen production as creative and aesthetic entertainment entities in their own right intend to entertain audiences by any means of communication modes, audiences themselves also devote remarkable amounts of time to select and experience screen products for the pursuit of fun, pleasure and enjoyment as the core of entertainment with their various viewing motivations. This hedonistic entertainment experience indeed appears to be the dominant theme of modern popular culture, particularly popular media. Understanding these mechanisms, it illustrates

key production elements of transnational popular media and discusses the roles and features of each production value. The chapter then examines how actively audiences get involved in the selective media context, polysemic interpretations, and instantaneous entertainment experience through hedonic and emotional engagement. Above all, it conceptualises the dynamics of audiences in the context of transnational media flow by understanding three important theories related to active audiences' consumption; 'Uses and Gratifications', 'Encoding/Decoding' and 'Audience Involvement'.

Abstract of chapter four

Reflecting a broad range of literature pertinent to the specified research propositions of the study drawing on media and communication studies, audience studies, (popular) cultural studies and tourism studies from a multidisciplinary perspective, Chapter four develops a theoretical conceptual framework. This framework outlines and highlights the key areas of the theories which have paramount conceptual, theoretical and methodological relevance to the study.

Abstract of chapter five

Chapter five provides an overview of the developments and the trend of *Hallyu* phenomenon the so-called *Korean Wave* that have influenced social and cultural practices in terms of audience consumption of Korean popular cultural products, specifically, Korean TV dramas in their importing countries. Given the relative lack of attention to TV dramas within the screen tourism literature and particularly in non-Western and non-English language settings, it focuses upon the relationships between the international success of serialised *Hallyu* TV dramas (e.g. *Winter Sonata* and *Daejanggeum*) and contemporary patterns of inbound tourism and international tourists in Korea related to the wider concept of screen tourism.

Abstract of chapter six

Chapter six outlines the research methodology of the present study and explains how the

study identified and operationalised the research problems in relation to research methods and analyses. It begins with the philosophical considerations in terms of epistemological and ontological issues in relation to the research questions and the theoretical position of this study. The overall research design is followed by highlighting the rationale of the judgement and the appropriateness of using mixed methods for the study. The results of a pilot study conducted are also included in this chapter in order to determine the final form of the questionnaire. Furthermore, practical issues including ethical consideration, albeit the inter-Asian dimension, are discussed in terms of language and translation matters.

Abstract of chapter seven

Chapter seven presents the analyses, findings and discussions from the semi-structured in-depth interviews with professional Korean TV drama production personnel

Abstract of chapter eight

The findings and discussions from on-site quantitative questionnaire survey are presented in Chapter eight.

Abstract of chapter nine

Chapter nine concludes and discusses the findings in a more theoretical and conceptual level in the following five ways: underlying mechanisms and structures between audience viewing experiences of transnational TV drama and screen tourism experiences; the role of emotion, nostalgia and place attachment in screen tourism; inter-relationships between cultural proximity, viewing experiences and screen tourism experiences; screen tourists as performers; and the significance of TV drama production in creation of screen tourism destinations. Lastly, theoretical contributions of the study and research implications for both screen practitioners and destination marketers are presented. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are also suggested.