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**Film-induced Tourism as a Tool
for Promoting Territorial Resources. The Case of Sicily
between Territorial Branding and Destination Management**

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Abstract

Pioneering studies of film-induced tourism by Beeton have highlighted the importance of the relationship between cinema and territory. In this perspective, Sicily, a land rich in cinematographic heritage, is the place where coexisting natural and human stages have captured the cinema. Just think, for example, some of Sicily's smaller towns such as Motta Camastra, Savoca, and Forza D'Agrò, used as settings in The Godfather, and finally, Inspector Montalbano filmed in the Ragusa area, capable of attracting millions of visitors each year. Taking into consideration the reputation of cinema, it can be created not only a tourism strictly connected to the cultural domain using the history of places to attract new travellers, but this could be an important resource for all the secondary places which the phenomenon of mass tourism still has not developed, implementing new dynamics of territorial development. The research aims to provide a reflection in which to understand how film-induced tourism influences the regional development, offering new insights in terms of destination management, creation of new patterns of cultural sustainable development, and introducing new conceptual models such as the dynamics of cultural destinations.

Keywords: film-induced tourism, Sicily, local development, territorial brand, film industry.

1. Introduction

This article will analyse the significant relationship between cinema and territory. This bond has been fed from the power that the media has assumed in our culture, becoming not only a simple visualisation device, but also a producer of spatial imagery. In this perspective, cinema has been able to give a new role at certain locations, giving it a new centrality in the decision-making process of the traveller,

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who, being stimulated and involved by cinematographic machinery, starts to manifest his interest in the exploration of those places. This concept is relevant to remark what Butler (1990) expressed, highlighting how film could play a vital role in the development of a tourism destination. The motivation for this study stems from the continuing interest in cinema as an accelerating factor in territorial enhancement and tourism development, particularly in peripheral or secondary destinations.

The investigation suggests a reflection on how film-induced tourism can influence destination branding manoeuvres and policies in Sicily and understand the sociocultural and economic impacts of film narratives on brand image strategies. To answer these questions, a qualitative methodology of a case study was adopted, focusing on the Montalbano series and its territorial impact in the Ragusa area. In this regard, this research wants to explore the link that cinema has assumed with Sicilian territory, a source of inspiration for many filmmakers. Moreover, an investigation will be performed concerning how the set of strategies of destination branding could be very important to enhance the positioning of a destination and in the construction of an authentic tourism offer.

The first part of the work is focused on an international literature review of film-induced tourism. Subsequently, will be analysed one of the most important cases of film-induced tourism in Sicily, Inspector Montalbano. In the last part of the work will be explored some theoretical aspects applied in the case study, the territorial effects of film-induced tourism in the Ragusa area and how a destination could become a location. Finally, this study also introduces the model of cultural destination dynamics, illustrates how the conversion from place to destination is influenced by the film medium.

2. Literature Review

Film-induced tourism requires a deep analysis because it incorporates key concepts from many disciplines. The large number of studies of cultural and economic geography have allowed us to highlight the main role that cinema has as a medium between the viewer and what the eye sees. These implications can generate some considerations of a metacognitive nature between the self and the were, with the possibility of conceiving these aspects as a new stimulus for territorial marketing (Nicosia, 2024). The relationship between geography, tourism, and cinema has allowed us to turn the light on new narratives and experiential codes, which have influenced the amount of strategic planning activities and destination marketing (Lizotte & Grenier, 2011; Macionis, 2004; Riley & Van Doren, 1992).

The first studies about film-induced tourism were realised by Cohen (1986), Butler (1990), and later by Riley et al. (1998), but an important contribution came from an Australian teacher, Sue Beeton, who created the most important work in this field of study. The Australian Professor took on another level of investigation concerning the dialogue between tourism and cinema, defining film-induced tourism as travelling in places that have been shown in TV series or films, but also consists of visiting production studios, theme parks, and actors' houses. Therefore, it involves everything that orbits around film activity that can produce tourism (Beeton, 2016).

Another definition comes from the Scottish Tourism Board (1991), which said that it involves the business of attracting visitors through the representation of the place or a place's storylines in film, video and television. This phenomenon has been observed on many occasions and under different gradations. Indeed, through the analysis by Butler (1990) and Beeton (2006), it was possible to assume in what manner the rise of film-induced tourism could have similarities with the travellers of the Grand Tour because of the emotional participation in viewing/reading places, which subsequently could result in a shift, even if inspired by two different media (Nicosia, 2015). This allows us to affirm that travel represents an evasive activity from routine and how the tool, first literarily and later cinematographically, can enhance the immersion into a new reality and different cultural context from those we are familiar with. From this perspective, Escher (2006) highlights how the landscape representation, in a cinematographic film, could be subject to a decodification in terms of representation of a concrete scenario and planned on the earth's surface or, alternatively, assume the role of an unreal environment. The protagonism of multiple landscapes contributes to a good film through the narrative function. This activity could be even represented in the transition zone between environment and emotion (Escher & Zimmermann, 2001; Higson, 1987). The cinematic landscape, mediated through this filtered narrative, shapes the formation of relational spaces where places, protagonists, and events do not exist, intersecting in the temporal and social dimensions, contributing to the making of an image (Lopez et al., 2018).

In this theoretical context, space and place have an important function. Space is nothing more than an area, environment, or landscape that is not impartial in the sentiment, affective, and emotional perspective. The place is a space full of emotional and sentimental expression, where we experiment with important experiences (Nicosia, 2021). Further research has highlighted how the capacity of a film to generate tourism is strictly correlated to the combination of three properties. The first is space, environment, and scenography. The second is the plot and the story, and the last are the characters of this tale. The narration assumes the role of a visual code integrated into the events of the film performers (Leotta, 2009; Luo et al., 2014; Pan & Tsang, 2014; Reijnders, 2009; Nieto-Ferrando et al., 2024). The continuous exposition of landscape, buildings, and monuments is nothing more than the trigger that stimulates numerous spectators into the exploration of narrated places, determining new motivations for touristic purposes (Hudson et al., 2011; Nieto-Ferrando et al., 2023; Pan & Tsang, 2014; Riley & Van Doren, 1992).

These principles, which represent the peculiarity of spaces, environment and scenario, are configured from the movements of the characters and the evolution of the narrative plot. Su et al. (2011) show that the engagement of spectators with the characters of films and TV series could modify the attitudes and expectations towards touristic attractions. Moreover, it is necessary to consider how the recent studies about film-induced tourism are moving towards theories of narrative involvement. Others are moving towards assimilation in media based on the persuasive attitudes of the storyline. Subsequent research has explored the

relationships between the value of the qualities of a film or series, such as the story, characters, actors, set design, and its consequences for tourism (Kim, 2012; Kim & Assaker, 2014; Wong et al., 2021). In Italy, we started talking of film-induced tourism when occasional tourist flows have become an important opportunity for revitalisation of the tourism sector in those places in which films or tv series were filmed as it happened on Aglie in Piedmont thanks to the tv fiction *Elisa di Rivombrosa*, or in Gubbio with the nine seasons of tv series *Don Matteo*, in Sicily in places such as Ragusa, Scicli and Modica with the episodes of *Montalbano Inspector* and in Cilento, in Castellabate, after the success of *Benvenuti al Sud* (Bagnoli, 2011). The triumph of a TV series is nothing more than the result of the capacity of the text to satisfy the expectations of spectators by representing episodes which are possible to identify or recognise oneself.

2.1 Film-induced Tourism: Fulcrum of Territorial Development

Cinema is the art that shows us the world with different gradations thanks to the use of its devices and its innovative techniques, for example, camera movement and film editing. A film allows us to combine the action of seeing and looking (Bernardi, 2022). Landscape is one of the aspects that persuades film productions to choose a place or a city to set their films. Even if the cinematographic landscape is not inevitably true, not always are the key performers of the events in the background; sometimes they are filtered by the filmmaker, who tries to alter perception (Shohat & Stam, 1996). Seeing connects us to knowledge, while looking inspires exploration. The landscape element in the history of cinema is omnipresent. Indeed, filmmakers have marked the importance of this concept as a revival of the human spirit.

This dialectic seeing-looking could represent a key factor in the composition of spatial structuration in the spectator's mind, who will see in the exploration of that place the conclusive result of that process. The territorial grammatical narrated by the seventh art could be inserted into a semiotic container, which makes spatial rarity a first constituent of objectivisation. Applying these theoretical axioms in the phenomenon of film induced tourism in Sicily, it is evident how the role of the totality of goods connected with a territorial valorisation approach, highlights the importance to build new patterns of territorial branding renewing the image of Sicily as an exemplar mode for the development of a cultural and sustainable tourism.

The energetic attractiveness of the Italian cinematographic imagery, such as *L'Avventura* and *The Godfather*, has created the basis for the beginning of a touristic expansion based on the relationship between destination and the need for authenticity wanted by travellers. These postulates allow us to connect with what Hom said when he spoke about the idealised space of tourism (Hom, 2015, p. 52). Unifying this concept to the different studies concerning film-induced tourism, we could define a multifaceted spatial representation that is observed both in real life and from a screen and becomes mythologised in the tourism practice. To know the dialogue between cinema, territory and development, we need first of all to understand the reasons which stimulate the spectator's imagination and later realise actions that could repropose the attractiveness of new visitors through a diversification of tourism

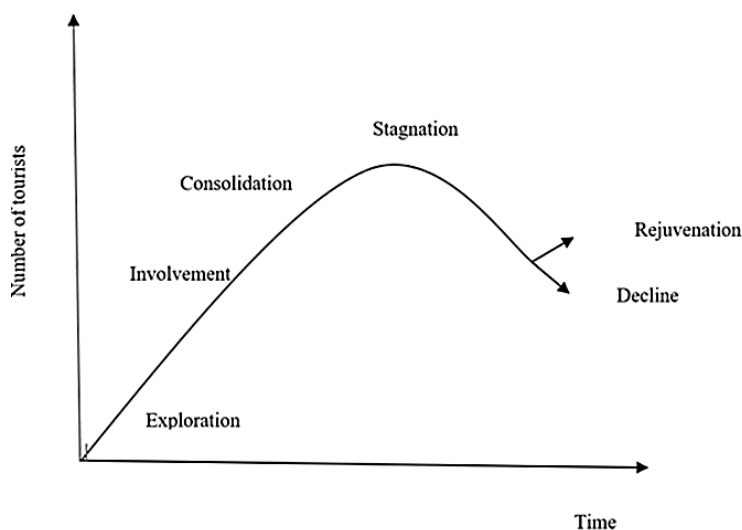
activity. Moreover, location can assume the role of film sets and, for this reason, the factors that destination managers could take into consideration are mainly two: first, the touristic offer, which is the whole resources and services of a destination, and second, customer demand and the public variety that choose the location. Investigating this point of view, it is relevant to affirm how a televised reproduction does not reproduce a creative code, but it comprises a plurality of articulate economic activities based on economic dialectics that influence progress and growth.

The territory designated to accommodate a film could obtain some economic advantages for the entire area from many views: economic increase, intensification of occupation, enterprise specialisation, human resource competence, and an increase in tourism consumption (Nicosia, 2012). In this circumstance, we can observe that mostly destinations acquire success for the offer, but in the film-induced tourism case there is a demand to make some places new destinations, triggering an innovative transformation in touristic terms. However, the method that verifies the alteration from location to destination can lead to a total conversion to the tourism sector, emphasising the construction of spectacular space.

3. Methodology

This article aims to analyse the impact of film-induced tourism in the Sicilian context, in particular the area of Ragusa, Modica and Scicli. For this reason, we decided to use a qualitative approach based on the reference literature and try to apply tourism models, such as the lifecycle of tourist destination and Plog's model. This last model was used to explain the different rules of the composition of tourists. These locations have been the centre of filming of television episodes of the series *Inspector Montalbano*, created by Carlo Degli Esposti for the Palomar, directed by Alberto Sironi. The magnificence of Sicilian Baroque, included in the World Heritage List in 2002, are different locations compared to the province of Agrigento, where Camilleri set his novels (Nicosia, 2022). *Montalbano's* places are being decontextualised compared to the original environment where the history takes place, to redraw a form of Sicily capable of hitting the TV viewer. The television alteration can only disappoint the experiential authenticity of the triumvirate viewer/tourist/traveller because they did not recognise how they had imagined. Despite this fact, the success of this TV series and its television transposition has determined an important success of this cultural product, becoming a crucial case of film-induced tourism in the Sicilian ecosystems. For this reason, it was decided to adopt the Lifecycle of tourist destination model created by Butler (1980) in order to reinterpret this model in a location that became famous thanks to a TV series. It is possible to represent this model with a Gaussian curve that reproduces the multiple phases.

Figure 1. Lifecycle of a tourist destination



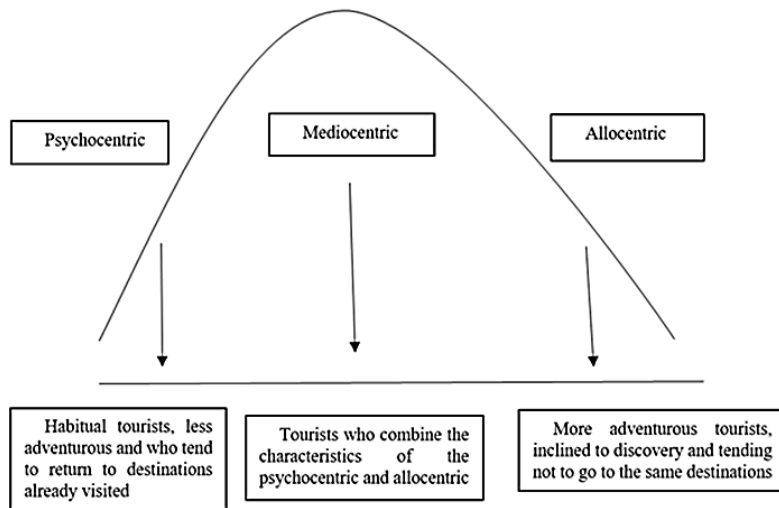
Source: own elaboration by Butler (1980).

In Figure 1, it is possible to observe the six levels of development, which have different supply and demand principles, with many spatial conformations of tourist nature and many necessities of resource optimisation. In the film-induced context, Inspector Montalbano has encouraged the traveller's engagement in the area of Modica, Ragusa, Scigli and Vigata(unreal name to indicate Porto Empedocle) (Clausi et al., 2007). The first phase is exploration, which took place in the first years of the 2000s, years during which the TV Series began to broadcast, and where there was a total absence of any tourism configuration, except for some voluntary initiatives. The second phase concerns the involvement. The local community see some economic advantages coming from tourism and they decide to program organisational activities. In this specific period, the politics of territorial promotion increased. In Montalbano's place, this condition happened in the first years of the 21st century, when the area of Ragusa experienced a large number of tourists (Nicosia, 2022). The third phase is the consolidation phase, when the promotional activities increase and the number of tourists in some period reaches a high number. The fourth phase is the stagnation phase, where the large amount of tourism compression increases the carrying capacity of a destination (Nicosia, 2022). The fifth phase is the decline, characterised by the destination's loss of competitiveness to a new destination. The level of tourism offers and the arrivals decrease. At the local government level, together with private actors, efforts are being made to create new ways of converting the image of the destination through new activities, attractions, and incentives that could lead to new economic nourishment. The last potential stage is rejuvenation, which can typically occur by looking at new values that juxtapose local traditions and original attractions. The relationship between film or television series and tourism cannot be limited to an economic valuation, but can

also be observed in the origins of motivations that transport tourists to explore that place. The point is to be able to specify how the desire towards some territories, raised thanks to the vision of a film or TV series, can be transformed into an ambition to better understand and even physically go to the location being filmed (Nicosia, 2015). For this purpose, it is possible to identify the causes that stimulate travel in two types: push and pull factors (Roesch, 2009). Push factors are divided into nine subcategories: escapism from daily life, relaxation, reputation, social interaction, retrogradation into adolescent attitudes, education, imagination, and originality. The quality of these factors, which recall the travellers towards the destinations, is in the journey itself. Pull factors indicate those principles that are encompassed in three subcategories. The first is composed of scenario, place, and attributes of destinations. The second is composed of performance, how genres and plots and finally personality, such as cast, celebrities, and characters (Nicosia, 2022).

The first category embraces all the immaterial and material peculiarity of a specific place, such as a landscape with an important beauty that films or TV series put in a privileged position. Additionally, even the social and cultural environment in a tourist destination is included in this classification. Performance is the peculiarity of a story thanks to the characters, who are incredibly essential because they create emotion in spectators. The viewers, due to this emotional engagement, become tourists attracted to the place and the set of that TV series or film. The third category has the most relevant element because inside there are the protagonists of TV series or films, which expand the economic value of the cultural content. It is very significant to examine the different results of film production on each of the singular conditions that mark the purchasing choice of a tourism product. To highlight this view, Nicosia (2012, 2022) identifies the five probable stages to be identified in this process: the born of desire, study of information, selection of alternatives, preference of destination, and purchase. As already shown by Nicosia (2022), it is possible to identify three different types of film-induced tourists: real film-induced tourists, Jet setter film-induced tourists and film-induced tourism accidentally. Real film-induced tourists represent the viewers who have developed, after watching the film, an engagement to justify the journey to that location. Jet setter film-induced tourists are those who leave to explore the real place where a film is set, with the purpose of attesting their presence. The motivation that pushes this movement is only to the ludic and emotional experience of a place that has become famous thanks to factors outside the territory, in these circumstances, a film set. Film-induced tourists accidentally choose a destination even knowing that in those places a film or tv series was set and discovering to be in a known place, they become at the same time consumers of the cultural resource. This could generate an extension of their permanence, producing new incremental expenditure. Taking into account the Plog model (1974) and elaborated by Nicosia (2022), it is possible to distinguish three categories of film-induced tourism: psychocentric, medium-centric, and allocentric.

Figure 2. Plog's model



Source: own elaboration by Plog, 1974.

As shown in Figure 2, psychocentric tourists are a typology that prefer locations that they know and they are less adventurous. On the other hand, we have allocentric tourists who are more dynamic. In the middle, we found mediocentric tourists, a category used to indicate travellers that combine some characteristics of psychocentric and allocentric (Passafaro et al., 2019). Applying this tripartition in the field of film-induced tourism, we can underline that classic psychocentric tourists prefer the visit in locations such as Marina di Ragusa, where it is possible to explore the Inspector Montalbano's house located on Puntasecca beach. Moreover, this film induced tourists' typology to satisfy their necessity through low-effort activities. Allocentric tourists, instead, are people who travel around locations that have been protagonists in TV series or films and are distant from any type of comfort. Mediocentric tourists select destinations that have recently been the focus of filming, but that are not an absolute novelty. They are in search of destinations capable of unifying services and ease of movement. Figure 2 allows us to rebuild the possible development phases of a destination which has been the focus of a TV series or film and, thanks to the presence of these three categories of tourists, it is possible to identify the maturation of a destination. Indeed, a strong presence of allocentric could mean a limited expansion or knowledge of that destination, which, as we saw before in Figure 1, corresponds with the initial phase of the lifecycle of a tourist destination. With the increase of mediocentric tourists, the complete development of tourism is observed until the appearance of mass tourism, signalled by a strong presence of psychocentrism (Nicosia, 2022). From this theoretical framework, it was created by Nicosia (2012) a tour of the main places of Inspector Montalbano. The point of start is Ragusa Ibla, where the ancient district in the TV series became Vigata, an unreal place invented by Andrea Camilleri. In the historical part of Ibla, where they were filmed many internal and external filming, we find the Cathedral of

St. George. Going toward Scicli, we met the Donnafugata Castle and the Town Hall. This last landmark is very significant in the TV series because it plays the role of Vigata police station, where the mayor's room becomes the inspector's room. The city of Modica is the main character with its magnificent cultural heritage, such as the church of San George and the Ascenzo Palace in Town Hall Square

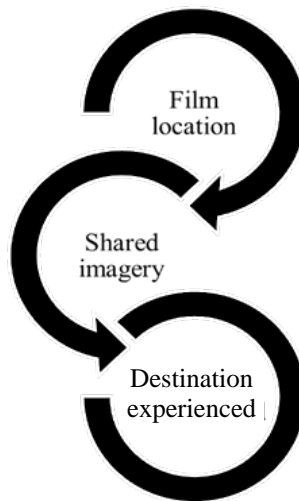
4. Analysis and Results Interpretation

The qualitative investigation of this study wanted to suggest a double approach: on the other hand, the importance of cinema as spatial narratisation, which contributes to stimulating the human imaginative capital that can converge in a tourism strictly connected to the cultural domain; on the other hand, the importance of phenomenon film-induced tourism, which is a key economic element for all the secondary destination where the tourism phenomenon has not developed yet. Starting with this statement, it is emphasised how film-induced tourism could implement new perspectives of territorial development through the creation of place branding policies to enhance the positioning of a destination compared with its competitors. Moreover, to adopt this strategy of territorial development, with policies of destination branding, it is important to have a clear identity of the area through the protection of local resources that can turn into the creation of a brand. The conception of a brand would improve the performance in terms of territorial storytelling, defining new economic opportunities.

For our investigation, it is crucial to take into consideration that destination branding, as described by Hosany et al. (2007), should be embraced by destination identity, personality, and image. In the case of Montalbano, identity should be the landscape and cultural frame where the story takes place. These contents could be utilised for travellers to perceive the authenticity of the territory. Personality contains all the elements of market diversification, in this case, from a tourism perspective. In this view, the aspects of diversification could be represented by itineraries in the locations where TV series were set using the strategy of taking on the UNESCO brand as a key prestige factor for the area. Lastly, we have the image, which is the amount of belief, ideals, and opinions that visitors have about a tourism destination (Cardoso et al., 2017). This final aspect was analysed by Nicosia (2022) through the application of a sentiment analysis in Montalbano's places. From this study, it emerges that out of a total of one hundred opinions on Modica, Ragusa Ibla, Scicli, and Puntasecca, shows a positive valuation of these places. The analysis was conducted by collecting a hundred reviews from the TripAdvisor site, and then finding the percentages of positive, negative, and neutral polarity. Finally, a concrete statistic of the most shared sentimental impact was implemented. For the analysis, the estimation from a rating index from bad to excellent was examined. The first location observed was Punta Secca, where Montalbano's house is located. Out of 296 reviews, 169 have an excellent rating. Then we move on to Scicli, in the seaside village of Sampieri, where the beach at this location was rated with 176 positive reviews. Further positive reviews were made at Fornace Penna and the Town Hall. In both cases, the comments show how these elements are important in the fiction

and distinguishable to the viewers of the TV series. The next location is Ragusa, with 3228 positive reviews. For the analysis, 100 opinions were extracted for the locations of Puntasecca, Scicli, Ragusa, and Modica. The beach of Puntasecca, out of 25 comments, showed 24 ratings between very good and excellent. As for Scicli, Sampieri was examined, where out of 25 reviews, 24 resulted in positive polarities. Ragusa Ibla out of 25 reviews, 100% result with positive polarity. For the 25 reviews on Modica, 24 result in positive polarity. It is deduced that film-induced tourism, in a brand image and destination management evaluation, should be analysed within a holistic vision which sees in the narrative culture, territorial identity, and tourism experience, the basis on which to realise policies of territorial promotion and valorisation. A film location could become a film-induced destination with the application of territorial marketing policies and with total strategies initiatives. The good result, in terms of tourist's arrivals and presences, is linked and influenced by trends of mass culture, especially at the moment when destinations are in the most mature period in the life cycle of the destination (Busby & Klug, 2001; Lizotte & Grenier, 2011; Tuclea & Nistoreanu, 2011; Pollice, 2012). For this reason, it was sought to realise the cultural destination dynamics model.

Figure 3. Cultural destination dynamics



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 3 shows how the conversion from location into destination is influenced by the cinematographic tool. Films or TV series assign to the location being filmed a transfer of experiential languages towards a destination, which is lived by these tourists and could define a symbolic shared imagery. Even if the model has not been empirically validated, it could represent a valuable tool for the destination manager regarding the transformation from location to destination through the imagery produced by film or TV series.

5. Conclusions

Tourism, defined as a dynamic system that embraces place, travellers, and market policies, sees in the interaction with the main communication medium a possible tool for territorial promotion and enhancement in the existing economic structure. From this point of view, the adoption of strategies of destination management and brand image applied in film-induced tourism tries to interpret new market trends that are realised in those territories that have been the focus of film or television footage. This social, economic, and experiential phenomenon, in the middle of a technological revolution, adopts new dimensions that call for careful consideration of spectacular consumption of the place and creation of new tourist destinations.

This study makes a theoretical contribution by placing film-induced tourism in the broader discourse of place branding and destination marketing. From a practical perspective, it provides reflections for destination managers aiming to enhance tourism policies based on film attraction. From a policy perspective, it proposes the need for strategic coordination between media production and local governance to promote new types of tourism. This study wanted to investigate one of the most important cases of film-induced tourism in Sicily, Inspector Montalbano.

Our research confirms how the image of Sicily, due to the use of film or TV series, could determine a sustainable and cultural development of tourism. The dialogue between cinema/TV series and tourism makes the narrated places the oneiric and imaginative setting of the viewer/tourist, conceiving a hybrid destination composed of filmic/television narration and effective representation. The use of economic and psychographic models allows us a better comprehension within a theoretical conceptual framework of the case study analysed. Moreover, we consider how this research contributes to a better cognition of film-induced phenomena from the viewpoint of production plans of place branding in Sicily. However, the research is limited by the absence of empirical validation and its focus on a single case study. Future studies could address these limitations through comparative analyses or quantitative methods. Future research could embrace the use of immersive technologies, with the purpose of transforming destinations into digitally advanced centres thanks to the use of digital narration. For an application of immersive technologies in the cultural sphere in the Sicilian context, see Trigilia et al. (2018) and Barbera et al. (2022). Furthermore, an important focus could relate to the creation of new market strategies in film-induced tourism destinations to attract new tourism targets such as Millennials.

Authors' Contributions

Nicosia E. wrote the introduction and final conclusions. Messina G. was responsible for the literature review. Rombo G was responsible for the section Film-Induced Tourism as a fulcrum of territorial development, methodology, analysis and interpretation of results. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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