

Balamory revisited: An evaluation of the screen tourism destination-tourist nexus

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ABSTRACT

It is well-established that tourism induced by film and television (TV) (screen tourism) is a phenomenon of global significance, and a number of studies since the 1990s have explored its impacts on specific destinations and communities. While some research provides insights into motivations of screen tourists, understanding of the experiences of screen tourists in film and TV locations remains an emerging area of inquiry. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to explore the interface between the screen tourist and the destination. The results of empirical research with screen tourists to the Isle of Mull (Scotland) to view the filming location for the children's TV show *Balamory* are discussed. First, the degree to which people are attracted to a location through film connections and the types of visits are explored. Second, the nature of visit experiences is analysed, allowing some consideration of emerging issues for both visitors and the destination. Third, the visitor propensity to return for a future visit is examined. The paper identifies that the lower the influence of *Balamory* for the visit, the higher the level of adult satisfaction, and that a return visit was more likely if visitors were satisfied with their trip, especially if *Balamory* was not the only reason for the visit. A structural equation modelling approach is adopted to explore some of the issues induced by an evaluation of visit experiences and the perceived likelihood of repeat visits, generating a range of widely applicable implications for screen tourism destination management and development.

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1. Introduction

The impact of screen tourism is evident in destinations world-wide and a growing body of research (Beeton, 2001; Chan, 2007; Connell, 2005a, 2005b; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006a, 2006b; Iwashita, 2006; Kim, Agrusa, Lee, & Chon, 2007; Olsberg/SPI, 2007; O'Neill, Butts, & Busby, 2005; Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998; Tooke and Baker, 1996) seeks to estimate, validate and evaluate its effects. In the UK alone, screen tourism is estimated to be worth about £1.6 billion, prompting about one in every five overseas visits to the country (Oxford Economic Forecasting, 2005). While the emergence and growth of the phenomenon have generated investigations into place awareness, effects on visitor numbers and the consequences of visits to film-related destinations (see Beeton, 2005; Mintel, 2003 for an overview), understanding of tourist experiences and perceptions of visiting places associated with film and television (TV) remain relatively undeveloped. The incidence of screen tourism has been recognised for some time, but direct

measurement of its impact has proved difficult (Busby and Klug, 2001), particularly in terms of capturing the screen tourist in field studies. Consequently, meaningful insights into the consumer experience are limited, restricting both the advancement of screen tourism research and the development of principles to harness, manage and benefit from associated tourism activity in destinations. Indeed, for destination managers, identifying the extent to which visits are induced by film and TV viewing is imperative if the benefits of such visits are to be achieved and central to this is gaining an understanding of visit experiences with a view to managing and marketing destinations in an appropriate manner. In particular, a pertinent issue for tourism marketers is tapping the interest created by film to stimulate return visits in the longer-term, thereby generating potential for sustained place interest, association and activity in destinations.

The generic term *screen tourism* is adopted in this paper to describe tourism that is generated by TV programmes, video, DVD as well as film, that is, small and big screen productions (but not TV programmes designed primarily to promote tourist destinations, such as holiday shows). The author considers the widespread use of the term *film tourism* (see Evans, 1997) to somewhat downplay the importance of TV programmes in stimulating tourism and thus

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screen tourism is a neater way to define the phenomenon (see also Olsberg|SPI, 2007). This paper contributes to the understanding of the subject by using a structural equation modelling approach to explore some of the issues induced by an evaluation of visit experiences and the perceived likelihood of repeat visits, generating a range of widely applicable implications for screen tourism destination management and development. Specifically, the paper utilises the findings of empirical research at a micro-level on screen tourists to explore three areas of enquiry. First, the degree to which people are attracted to a location through film connections and the type of visits that emerge from investigative study are explored. Second, the nature of visit experiences is analysed, allowing some consideration of emerging issues for both visitors and the destination. Third, the visitor propensity to return on a future visit is examined. The geographic focus of the research is the Isle of Mull, Scotland, the filming location for the children's TV show *Balamory*. The paper provides an update to an earlier paper published in *Tourism Management* (Connell, 2005a), which discussed the perception of impacts by the tourism business community on the Island, indicating that the study of visitor perceptions would form a useful future area of inquiry in order to more fully understand the screen tourism phenomenon. *Balamory*, while a children's show, is a key production to study due to the unprecedented increase in visitor numbers that it created, which has now been acknowledged nationally in UK Film Council sponsored research (Olsberg|SPI, 2007).

2. A developing research agenda

By means of a brief introduction to the research context of screen tourism, it is apposite to highlight the major themes within the tourism research literature, which demonstrate the significance of screen tourism and the need to recognise the implications of associated activities. Studies of the relationships between film, TV and tourism are relatively new, and in development mainly since the early 1990s given the growing recognition of screen tourism as an identifiable phenomenon. The major themes are as follows:

2.1. Identification of screen tourism activity

The earliest screen tourism studies (see Butts, 1992; Riley & Van Doren, 1992; Riley et al., 1998) established the existence of this form of tourism, highlighted relevant issues and initiated further research. More recent research highlights the occurrence of screen tourism through case examples throughout the world (Beeton, 2005; Mintel, 2003). Initially, most screen tourism research focused on activity in USA, UK, New Zealand and Australia, although research activity has widened to mainland Europe and Asia, reflecting the spread of the phenomenon.

2.2. Impacts of screen tourism on host destinations

The emphasis of a great deal of screen tourism research to date lies within the cluster of research focusing on destination impacts. Central to this strand is the principle of managing destination impacts to gain maximum economic benefit while minimising cultural and environmental damage, community disturbance, disruption of longer-term tourism products and markets, and resident well-being (see Beeton, 2005, 2004, 2001; Connell, 2005a, 2005b; Croy and Walker, 2003; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006a; Mordue, 2001; O'Neill et al., 2005; Riley et al., 1998; Tooke and Baker, 1996). Much of this work relates to specific case studies.

2.3. Screen tourism, marketing and destination image formation

A number of studies highlight applied approaches to destination marketing to induce economic benefits through film and TV exposure (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006a, 2006b), revealed particularly in the example of the New Zealand Government's vigorous promotion and development of *Lord of the Rings* themes and activities (Carl, Kindon, & Smith, 2007; Jones & Smith, 2005; Tzanelli, 2004). Related to this strand is the idea of image formation and propensity to visit through viewing places on-screen (Iwashita, 2006; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Larsen & George, 2006; Warnick et al., 2005).

2.4. The characteristics and motivations of screen tourists

While a few studies focus on screen tourists, the area remains substantially unexplored in the academic literature compared with destination impact studies. Busby and Klug's (2001) and Beeton's (2001) surveys derive the characteristics of screen tourists in two screen destinations, while Macionis (2004), Singh and Best (2004), Busby and O'Neill (2006) and Chan (2007) develop the field by examining motivations.

2.5. The experiences of screen tourists

More recent studies by Kim et al. (2007) and Carl et al. (2007) have examined tourist experiences, but this remains an emerging area of work that would benefit from further empirical studies that delineate, illustrate and evaluate the nature of screen tourism and the implications for destinations. It is to this relatively uncharted area that this paper is directed. It aims to progress understanding of the appeal of screen tourism destinations, the experience of visiting, the likelihood of return visits and the implications for tourism destination marketing and management. Prior to discussion of empirical work, a review of literature and applied research relating to these subjects of enquiry is presented.

2.6. The tourism appeal of screen destinations

As much of the literature recognises, capitalising on the positive impacts of screen tourism can assist in the strategic development of tourism activity in destinations by supplementing the product portfolio, increasing tourist awareness and appeal of the destination, and in turn contributing to the viability of tourism, a concept that has been recognised for some time (see Butler, 1990; Croy and Walker, 2003; Hornaday, 1994; Riley and Van Doren, 1992) and well-established in research literature (see e.g. Beeton, 2005; Mintel, 2003; Olsberg|SPI, 2007; Riley et al., 1998). Film and TV scenes and images have the potential to endure for many years, creating a powerful and alluring destination product or experience (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998), although it is the interplay of landscape qualities and icons, storylines and characters, and the extent to which locations act as a significant feature in filming that is likely to induce visits (Riley and Van Doren, 1992; Riley et al., 1998). In this respect, screen-induced tourism is only likely to follow where locations are effectively transcribed from film to reality and where landscape, place and emotional associations are strong (Escher and Zimmerman, 2001; Olsberg|SPI, 2007).

There are many examples where filming took place in substitute locations but still stimulated tourism in the places that were intended to be portrayed (e.g. the film *Braveheart* (1995) caused a tourism boom in Scotland due to its depiction of William Wallace and the fight for Scottish independence, but was filmed mostly in Ireland). In this way, a destination becomes socially constructed, in this case by film-makers, as authentically somewhere else (see

Wang, 1999 for a discussion on constructive authenticity). This construct suggests that real place settings can be confused with – and even less important to tourists than – imagined ones, the central tenet of Eco's (1986) hyperreality concept as applied to screen tourism. Schwartz (2004) refers to the manipulation in film-making as a transforming viewer consciousness, creating "movie-awakened sensibilities" which the tourist industry readily takes advantage of (Schwartz, 2004: 344). As such, tourists are not attracted to experience the reality of the place, but to consume a mythology and find personal meaning at the interface of emotions, story and setting, where the boundary between reality and fantasy is indistinguishable (Schofield, 1996). Conversely, fans of cult film and TV tend to undertake inordinate amounts of research to seek out precise film locations, some of which may be 'underground', i.e. not promoted or commercialised (Hills, 2002).

Yet, as Doyle (2003) comments, screen tourism is generally not on the agenda when programmes are made, and essentially an incidental form of tourism (or accidental as Beeton, 2004 describes). However, to capitalise on screen links, destination marketing organisations occasionally plan and execute direct campaigns to promote movie locations and themes with a view to stimulating visits (e.g. VisitScotland's £1.3m European campaign in collaboration with Sony Pictures to promote *Da Vinci Code* locations, and the notable international marketing campaign to stimulate visits to the USA in 2004 devised by the Visit America Alliance using movie locations with the catchline 'you've seen the movies, now visit the set'). The existence of dedicated units in national tourism organisations, local authorities and local tourism agencies to facilitate both filming and screen tourism is testament to the importance placed on the power of film and TV in generating visits to locations.

2.7. The experiences of screen tourists

There is a gap in the research literature with regard to the on-site experiences of screen tourists and consequently there is little understanding of how screen tourists perceive, interact and relate to the destination. Through Macionis (2004), Singh and Best (2004) and Busby and O'Neill's (2006) small-scale study of Cephallonia in the wake of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, some progress has been made in terms of understanding motivation, but further research is needed to understand screen tourism experiences in destinations. A study focusing on participants on *Lord of the Rings* (LOTR) tours in New Zealand identified that hyperreality played an important role in screen tourist satisfaction, and that the higher the degree of involvement and consumption, the more enhanced the tourist experience (Carl et al., 2007). The findings of this LOTR study provide a useful basis on which to test this idea in other contexts, particular where no direct screen products or services have been developed to capitalise on screen tourism. Similarly, Couldry's work on *Coronation Street* (1998, 2005) provides useful insights but focuses on visits to a simulated film set. What the research in this paper is concerned with is the experiences of visitors to a real place that was used as the backdrop to a TV programme, where there are no commercial tours or screen-related services on offer. Busby and O'Neill (2006) provide some limited insights, highlighting that more promotion of Corelli themes was considered appropriate by tourists visiting the region for the first time.

A further issue is probing the extent to which screen tourists are drawn to a place just to see a filming location. Macionis and Sparks (2006) state that most screen tourists are incidental (i.e. just happen to be at the destination) but increasing evidence, especially from UK research (see OlsbergSPI, 2007), implies that huge increases in visitors correspond with film and TV showcasing, indicating that the importance of screen tourism as a drawcard should not be underestimated.

2.8. Screen tourism and the longer-term: generating repeat visits

Critics of screen tourism, as a means of sustaining tourism in destinations, point to the limited duration of interest in film, TV and related sites as a disadvantage in strategic planning. Indeed, Riley and Van Doren (1992), using Ritchie's definition of a hallmark event, claim destination-based screen tourism to be of limited duration, rather like the tourism attraction life-cycle (see Lennon, 2001). Yet, as Beeton (2005) highlights, screen tourism is more appropriately defined as a pilgrimage that displays an element of longevity, particularly in the case of televised drama. Indeed, while film (specifically *film* rather than TV) tourism activity tends to reach peak interest following the launch of a film, the enduring qualities of some film and TV outputs often draw visitors for many years post-launch (Riley et al., 1998) or termination of TV series. A number of examples demonstrate the longevity of screen-induced tourism, although much evidence remains anecdotal: for example: the "scores of tourists" (see Straziuso, 2004) that seek out the steps of Philadelphia Art Museum to run up them as Sylvester Stallone did in the 1976 movie *Rocky*; and the Hollywood musical *The Sound of Music* (1965), filmed in and around Salzburg, still attracts tourists particularly from USA where the film is shown frequently on TV (East & Luger, 2002). Corroborating data illustrates current activities associated with UK film and TV that in some cases is inspired by productions first screened more than 40 years ago (see Table 1).

Interestingly, many of these appear to be 'cult' offerings (i.e. popular within a self-identified grouping of dedicated fans to whom a particular theme appeals), where the initial fan base has been supplemented by new viewers through TV repeats and release of pre-recorded video and DVD products. Arguably, a long-running TV series is more likely to sustain interest, given the likelihood of viewer interest in place, stories and characters and the opportunities afforded by long-term association for destination marketers in product placement or for studio tours (see e.g. Couldry's, 1998 analysis of the British continuing drama *Coronation Street*). For destinations, harnessing long-term associations through attention to the visit experience, visitor satisfaction and creating sustained appeal, thereby generating repeat visits from an initially film-induced visit, presents opportunities and challenges, as indicated in the literature on screen tourism destination impacts. This is particularly the case given that like literary-induced tourists, to whom screen tourists have been likened (Beeton, 2005), visitors tend to be visiting the location for the first time and usually mirror the reader profile (Pocock, 1992) or, in the case of screen tourism, 'viewer' profile. Accordingly, grasping first-time visits and transforming these into repeat visits will create a legacy of screen tourism.

The literature on repeat visiting is even less well-developed than that of screen tourism, although within the field of marketing it is well-established that maintaining a long-term relationship with customers achieves competitive advantage and reduces the cost of attracting new custom (Jobber, 2006; Kotler & Armstrong, 2007). According to this approach, the intention and willingness of customers to repeat purchase depend upon the level of their satisfaction with the product or service, where if they are satisfied they will be more likely to purchase again. In a tourism context, long-range planning and generating customer satisfaction should be the two major objectives of tourism businesses and destinations in maintaining competitive advantage, the key element of destination management and marketing strategy (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). While visitor satisfaction is a highly complex subject (Ryan, 2002) that can be affected by the interplay of internal and external factors, Kozak (2001) suggests that the overall level of visitor satisfaction has the greatest impact on the intention to revisit the same destination, indicating that experience with a particular destination could stimulate future behaviour and repeat visits. Gitelson and

Table 1
Long-term screen associations and visitor activity in the UK

Location	Title	Type	Year of first release	Current activities
Doune Castle, Central Scotland	<i>Monty Python and the Holy Grail</i>	Film (but associated with comedy TV series <i>Monty Python's Flying Circus</i>)	1975	Film fans from all over the world contribute about one-third of visitors to Doune Castle every year (2006 visitor numbers 35,401). An annual themed event is held every September for film fans (since 2004). The growth in visitor numbers to Doune Castle 2005–2006 was 29.2%, compared with 2.1% growth in visits to all castles in Scotland. ^a
Portmeirion, North Wales	<i>The Prisoner</i>	Cult TV Series, 17 episodes	1967	About 10% of annual visitor numbers (250,000) are film fans. Shop in village sells <i>Prisoner</i> themed gifts. Annual convention held since 1978 for members of the Prisoner Appreciation Society (1000 members globally).
Thirsk, North Yorkshire	<i>All Creatures Great and Small</i>	Two feature films based on the James Herriot novels Prime time Sunday night TV Series	1974–1975 1978–1990	Thirsk is home to <i>The World of James Herriot</i> , a visitor attraction based at the home of the infamous real-life vet, attracting about 45,000 visitors per year. The centre also portrays sets from the TV filming.
Kircudbright, South West Scotland	<i>The Wicker Man</i>	Film (cult horror/thriller)	1972	Since 2002, an annual weekend festival based loosely on the film has been held in July. 'The Wicker Man Festival' offers cult music, dance and art. In 2006, 16,000 attendees were recorded, from a baseline of 5000 in 2002.

^a Data extracted from the 2006 Visitor Attraction Monitor (VisitScotland).

Crompton (1984) identified five factors that influenced repeat visitation, including: reduced risk of an unsatisfactory experience; likelihood of mixing with “their kind of people”; re-experiencing an emotional childhood attachment to a location; engaging in aspects of the destination which had been omitted on a previous visit; and to introduce others to a location previously enjoyed. These factors should be considered in addition to the tourist simply wishing to re-experience an enjoyable location or memory. However, Tak-Kee and Wan (2006) argue that tourists' overall satisfaction level is an insignificant predictor of repeat visiting, with variables such as climate, attractions, and facilities of greater significance. Nevertheless, more empirical knowledge of the determinants of repeat visiting is likely to be useful to policymakers attempting to develop, improve and secure the economic benefits of repeat visiting (Darnell & Johnson, 2001) and tourist loyalty (Petrick, 2004) to screen destinations.

The legacy of screen tourism (see Beeton, 2004), as a product that can clearly stimulate visitor activity in the short-term, could be to sustain tourism in the long-term rather than being reliant on new tourists, capturing the imagination and loyalty of first-time screen visitors to a region and stimulating repeat visits, perhaps to discover more about a destination other than its screen connections, can assist in the strategic tourism development process, if carefully managed in suitable destinations. This aspect now forms part of an analysis of screen tourist perspectives in a Scottish case study.

3. A screen tourism destination: Scotland, the Isle of Mull and Balamory

Scotland is well-established as a screen tourism destination and the national tourism organisation, VisitScotland, has long acknowledged its importance (see Hydra Associates, 1997). Scotland provides a diverse range of locations that form a backdrop to small and big screen productions (Scottish Screen, 2007a) and on average, 12 large scale films and eight TV dramas are filmed each year in the country (Scottish Screen, 2007b). Scottish locations are famously portrayed in a range of films, from the stunning sands of St. Andrews as in *Chariots of Fire* (1981), to the Highland landscapes

of *The Water Horse* (2007) and the mean streets of pre-regenerated Leith in *Trainspotting* (1996). Indeed, *Local Hero* (1983) filmed in Pennan (Aberdeenshire) and Morar (West Highlands) was voted by film critics and writers in 2005 as creating the strongest sense of place and the most atmospheric use of a British location (Film Distributor's Association, 2005). Principally, international screen tourist interest in Scotland was created in the 1990s by a cluster of films and TV series related to Scotland, including two blockbuster movies *Braveheart* (1995) (see Edensor, 2005) and *Rob Roy* (1995), and two TV series *Hamish Macbeth* (1995–1997) and *Monarch of the Glen* (2000–2005), all of which utilise Scottish tradition, mythology and landscape to varying degrees. Filming of major scenes in, for example, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Mrs Brown* (1997), *The Queen* (2006), *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007) and *Doomsday* (2008) have further validated Scotland as an international screen location. One of the most visited screen destinations in recent years has been the Isle of Mull, with the huge popularity of the pre-school children's TV programme *Balamory* (BBC Scotland filmed, 2002–2005).

The Isle of Mull (pop. approx. 3000) is situated on the west coast of Scotland (see Fig. 1) and renowned for its natural beauty, wildlife (see e.g. Woods-Ballard et al., 2003), dramatic landscapes, unspoilt coastlines and castles.

The Island, which is only accessible by ferry, accommodates around 400,000 visits per year. It has played host to the filming of several movies (or movie scenes) including *Entrapment* (1999), *I Know Where I Am Going* (1945) and *When Eight Bells Toll* (1971) (Bruce, 1996; Pendreigh, 2002), although was not a major screen destination until 2003. Since then, the tiny capital town Tobermory, famed for its iconic painted harbourside houses often depicted in Scottish tourism promotional imagery, has become a screen tourism highlight for those seeking the real *Balamory*. The programme is filmed in the town using the exteriors of several painted houses which appear throughout the show, and in the opening and closing graphics. The houses are a prominent feature in each programme, immortalised in the theme song that includes the refrain “which coloured house are we going to...?” *Balamory* is unique in several ways for Mull, for it is the only TV series filmed on the Island and the only production to create a mass tourist influx there. Viewing

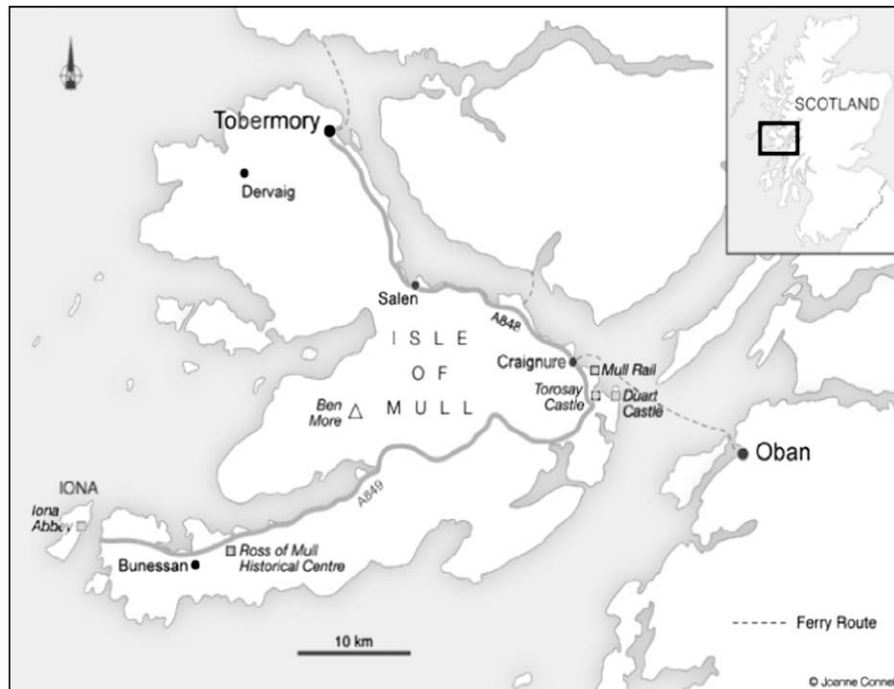


Fig. 1. Location map of the Isle of Mull.

figures in the UK were estimated at 750,000 per episode in 2004 (BBC Worldwide, 2004) and many episodes are available on video and DVD as well as the BBC digital channel *Cbeebies*, extending and prolonging Tobermory's exposure to the audience well into the future. More recently, *Balamory* has been transmitted to a world-wide audience through BBC Prime.

A curiosity to see the coloured houses and the filming location for the show quickly transformed Tobermory into a 'must-visit' destination for families with young children. The number of additional tourists to the island has risen by about 150,000 per year, and these extra visitors are predominantly families (Argyll, the Isles, Loch Lomond, Stirling and the Trossachs (ALLST) Tourist Board, 2003). The '*Balamory* effect' was greeted with both a positive and negative reception in the local community. Connell (2005a) reported that about 50% of business across the Island, and 75% in Tobermory, saw a rise in the number of tourists due to the desire to 'see *Balamory*'. However, accommodation and transport providers experienced capacity related problems, and some tourism business operators expressed a number of concerns about the increases in the family market (Crilly, 2003; Ross, 2004). Anecdotal evidence claimed that tourist expectations were not always met, with no *Balamory*-based features or attractions apart from the exteriors of the coloured houses used in filming (which are private residences), and few child-oriented services (Kelbie, 2005; Reid, 2004; Seenan, 2004). No consultation with stakeholders occurred prior to selecting the filming location, primarily because there was no prediction of the boost in visitor numbers. Consequently, the show's producers, along with the local community and tourism organisations, were taken by surprise at the show's success and the subsequent allure of Tobermory. The flood of visitors was even more astonishing given the initial absence of place promotion of the town as *Balamory* (Connell, 2005b), and its relative remoteness. These issues and the business response to *Balamory* are discussed in-depth by Connell (2005a, 2005b) but one of the problems is that there is no understanding (based on empirical data) of who visitors are and what experiences they have, thus the implications for planning and management of tourism for the benefit of host and guest are only

partially explored in this case. An appreciation of visit characteristics and experiences is required to determine current issues and those relating to the longer-term development of screen tourism, given that the legacy of *Balamory* is likely to be the existence of a new generation of tourists brought up watching the show.

Accordingly, the justification of an investigation to identify and evaluate visits to see the setting of the show is clear: to gain insights into visitor activity, perceptions and experiences which can assist in deriving indicators and actions for tourism management, marketing and development at the local level, while yielding more widely applicable principles. The paper now turns to the findings of an empirical study of visitors to *Balamory*.

3.1. Research methods

The primary aim of the research was to explore the responses of family groups, whose visit to the Isle of Mull incorporated a trip to see the real-life film location of *Balamory*, in relation to their visit experiences. The objectives of the research sought to identify the degree of influence of *Balamory* on a visit to the Isle of Mull, visit characteristics, visit experiences and the likelihood of a return visit being made. Central to this process was the identification and evaluation of the audience, thus a suitable research method was required.

The main research tool was a three-page questionnaire administered to tourists on afternoon ferry crossings, to target those returning from a visit to the Island (i.e. Craignure–Oban as in Fig. 1: a 45-min journey). On embarkation, and when possible, in the embarkation queue, adults with young children (notionally 6 years old and under) were systematically approached to ascertain if a visit to '*Balamory*' had formed part of the family visit to the Island. If so, one adult from each family group was asked to complete a questionnaire, a commonly used method in family-oriented research (Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001), while three questions were directed at the respondent's child/children with permission (and where appropriate given age-related constraints on answering).

The data collection period was set over six weeks in the summer peak season. Some 195 questionnaires were generated for analysis. The non-response rate was about 30%, subject to changes in climate, with higher numbers of refusals on extremely hot or wet days when children required more attention (i.e. higher levels of antagonism) and better rates when the weather was more equable. No other patterns of non-response were noticeable, except that the small number of overseas families approached did not feel able to answer the survey. As a result, the survey was confined to domestic tourists, which is not viewed as a constraint as the television of *Balamory* overseas was limited at the time, and also reflects the visitor profile to Mull. The sample size is the same sample size as that achieved in the Mull Visitor Survey (Argyll and the Isles Enterprise, Argyll, the Isles, Loch Lomond, Stirling and the Trossachs Tourist Board, Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Tourist Board and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2000), and therefore judged as a suitable representation.

The decision to undertake the survey on the ferry rather than in Tobermory was dominated by several factors, but mainly because capturing responses in the town would have been inefficient. The spatial configuration of the town meant that tourists were dispersed and there were no effective survey points at which to capture respondents. Second, it would have been irresponsible to ask for survey information from a carer with responsibility for children, given that there were few safe places to stop in Tobermory (recognising the dangers of combining excited children, narrow pavements, traffic and the harbourside). Third, when approaching tourists it might not be clear whether they have spent enough time in Tobermory to be able to answer the questions. Last, it would have been unfair to target tourists leaving Tobermory, who were often concerned about leaving on time to get a seat on a bus and to catch the ferry home. Undertaking the survey on-board the ferry offered solutions to these difficulties.

Four key elements formed the structure of the questionnaire: first, gaining information on the tourist and the visit, including the degree to which *Balamory* was the main driver of the visit; second, an assessment of tourist behaviour and on-site activity; third, gauging the degree of satisfaction with the visit, exploring those aspects of the visit most liked and most disliked from the perspective of both the carer and the child. A final element focused on whether a return visit might be likely in the future based on this visit. A five-point Likert scale was employed to assess expectations prior to the visit, in conjunction with experiences gained on the trip, while likes and dislikes were gained through open questioning. The use of an open style question to gauge experiences dispensed with concern over potential researcher bias in deriving closed categories.

A limitation of the survey is that it mainly, although not exclusively, captured foot passengers, due to embarkation and disembarkation logistics. However, this was not seen as an undue constraint, as observations and advice from the ferry operators revealed that most *Balamory* visitors were day visitors on foot rather than those using the car or coach. The research process did not allow for in-depth interactions with respondents given the limited amount of time available to interview passengers on the ferry.

4. Discussion of findings

Acknowledging the above limitations, findings are now explored in two dimensions. First, a descriptive analysis, using basic frequencies, cross-tabulations and chi-squared analysis where appropriate, reports on visit characteristics, the degree of importance of *Balamory* in stimulating the visit, visit experiences and degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction associated with the visit. Following this, a structural equation model approach is developed and presented

to explore relationships and meanings through multiple dimensions of visit characteristics, experiences and propensity to make a return visit.

4.1. Types of visits to Balamory

Analysis of the data indicates that 96% of respondents were visiting Mull for the day, while 81% of the sample was on holiday. Most day visitors had started their journey from within the Argyll and Bute area, with the greatest proportion (40%) from Oban, although 16% had travelled some distance (80–120 miles). Most of those travelling longer distances were on day trips from home, indicating a significant destination draw when one combines a car journey on the remote and twisting single-carriageways of the region with the demands of a young family. Further, those on a day trip from home were more likely to be visiting just to see the film location than those visiting from a holiday base other than Mull (46.4% compared with 32.9% of visitors). Postal code analysis revealed that some 34% of the sample lived in Scotland, with a concentration in the Glasgow area, the nearest large urban centre.

In line with Pocock (1992), 70% of visitors were first-time visitors to Mull. The dominant form of group composition was parents with children (67% of all respondents, with 53% composed of two parents and children). Some 91% of the sample was composed of groups with 1–3 children. The age profile of children in the *Balamory* survey clearly corresponded with the pre-school focus of 'Balamory', with 41% of children aged 3–5 years, and 67% aged 2–6 years. These findings provide evidence of the significant number of young and very young children travelling with their families to Mull to 'see *Balamory*' as reported by the Tourist Board (Dehany, 2003 personal communication).

4.2. Establishing the degree of importance of Balamory in stimulating the visit

Clearly portrayed by the survey findings was the desire to visit Tobermory for its role as *Balamory*, with some 69% of the respondents stating that they would not have made their visit to Mull otherwise. Using Macionis's (2004) categorisation that identifies specific, general and serendipitous film tourists, the results indicate that *Balamory* attracts a large proportion of specific screen tourists, who actively seek out places portrayed on TV. This finding is quite startling given that there was little active promotion of *Balamory* at this time, but highlights the strong appeal of the images viewed on TV. An examination of the data relating to the extent to which *Balamory* was an attractor for the visit that day, 'seeing *Balamory*' (i.e. the film location, primarily the coloured houses) was the single most significant motive for visits, with 34% of respondents visiting simply to 'see *Balamory*'. A further 36% of respondents visited to 'see *Balamory* and to explore Tobermory'. Much fewer visits were 'general' (14.5%), made to 'see *Balamory* and other places on Mull', and 'serendipitous', where visitors went to Tobermory as part of a visit to see the island (14%). The data suggests the emergence of an additional category of visitor that supplements Macionis's (2004) spectrum, the 'elite' visitor, who is visiting purely to view the filming location with no other motive, while 'specific' visitors specifically travel to see the film location and explore the immediate vicinity while there. There is a clear differentiation between those visitors who are visiting Mull simply to see the filming location and those who, while *Balamory* is the primary motivator, want to visit the destination and see what it has to offer upon which the following discussion will elaborate.

An evaluation of the data reveals several distinctive differences between 'elite' visits made 'just to see *Balamory*' and other types of visit, hinting at the existence of a typical *Balamory*-induced visitor/visit. While Table 2 outlines some of the main characteristics of

Table 2

Main characteristics of respondents who visited 'just to see Balamory' compared with other types of tourist

	Percentage of respondents	Pearson chi-square value	p-Value
First time visit to Mull	73.1	1.017	0.797
On a day trip from home	46.4	10.528	0.104
Did not visit other places/attractions	85.1	57.228**	0.000
Visit more likely to be prompted by child	74.6	33.958**	0.000
Knew little about destination pre-visit	40	11.516	0.242
More likely to follow film location trail	84.6	6.192	0.103
Seeing coloured houses was highlight for kids	92.3	20.835*	0.05
Expected more <i>Balamory</i> -related things to do	83.1	18.476	0.102
<i>Balamory</i> theme not promoted enough	10.8	24.417**	0.018
Spent less time than expected at destination	30.8	7.184	0.304
More likely to buy <i>Balamory</i> merchandise	84.6	11.678**	0.009
Felt less welcome in Tobermory	11.1	18.989	0.08
Parent more likely to be disappointed with visit	34.9	10.639	0.560
Less likely to return in future	55.2	16.317	0.177

* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$.

tourists, other differences between visits that were made 'just to see *Balamory*' compared with other types of visits that are noteworthy include the composition of groups and the perception of the visit. More visitors in this category were grandparents with children (15.3%), compared with 7.4% when the visit to *Balamory* was more incidental. Elite tourist visits were more likely to be prompted by children rather than carer/parent. Due to the focus of the visit, these respondents were more likely than others to visit all the coloured houses (84.6% compared with 61.5% of those who were visiting *Balamory* as part of a trip to see the Isle of Mull) and buy souvenirs (84.6% compared with 50%), significant at the 99% confidence level. Of all those concerned about the safety of children in the destination, by far the greatest level of concern was expressed by those visiting just to see *Balamory*. Similarly, of all those visitors disappointed with their visit, more than half were elite screen tourists.

4.3. Pre-visit information search

One of the problems of *Balamory*-related tourism as perceived by businesses on the island is that most of these tourists have little knowledge or idea about the geography of Mull and its limited infrastructure in terms of roads, accommodation and facilities (Connell, 2005b). The survey indicated that a significant number of people had gained some information prior to visiting, but 31% did not know much, while 4% admitted to knowing nothing at all about the island. These data suggest that about one-third of film-induced tourists do not know what to expect from their visit to the island. In addition, a negative correlation was found between research prior to the visit and time expected to spend on visit (chi-squared $p = 0.001$) and lots to do for children in Tobermory (chi-squared $p = 0.003$), and both factors related to visit disappointment. Such a finding would seem to contradict Hill's (2002) analysis that fans research film locations thoroughly. Such findings raise implications for the marketing of the destination where essential information to potential tourists (such as awareness of limited public transport, length of journey and facilities on offer) is not transmitted prior to travel. Despite the best efforts of marketing bodies on the Island, if tourists fail to gain information before travel, through a tunnel vision approach to "we must see *Balamory*", then expectations may not match actual experience and subsequent levels of satisfaction. The findings indicated that Tourist Information Centres and websites were the most used sources of visit information, suggesting that a stronger message about the realities of the Island should be portrayed in these sources.

Information provision is important because knowing the amount of time available to spend on the Island can be a major dictate of activity choices, and subsequent visit experiences. For foot passenger day trips, time in Tobermory is restricted according

to the limited bus and ferry timetables. Accordingly, 43% of respondents spent a morning or an afternoon in Tobermory, while 35% spent between one and two hours. Some 19% spent a whole day, although these respondents were more likely to be staying overnight rather than day-trippers. For nearly three-quarters of respondents, this was about the amount of time expected to spend. However, 22% stated that they had spent less time than expected, which suggests that tourists may have higher expectations of what Tobermory has to offer than in reality. In addition, one-quarter of respondents thought that the journey from the ferry port to Tobermory was longer than they had anticipated. These findings raise serious issues for the local tourism industry on Mull, and those engaged more widely in screen tourism destination management in terms of meeting expectations through pragmatic marketing approaches.

4.4. Evaluating the experiences of screen-induced tourists

Responses to attitude statements are summarised in Table 3. While the majority of respondents were satisfied with their visit, not all experiences were positive. A responsive tourism industry needs to be aware of what causes dissatisfaction and thus it is important to explore these factors. Some 28.7% of adult respondents were disappointed with their trip (although only 16.3% of children were very disappointed). Visit disappointment appears to be relatively low for children, but somewhat higher for adult respondents, indicating that parents/carers have a more finely tuned notion of the leisure experience they want their children to have, which may exceed the actual satisfaction level of children themselves. An overriding theme derived from the results was that respondents expected more *Balamory*-related activities, as well as more for children to do. A mere 14.7% thought that there were lots of things for children to do in Tobermory.

Further probing of those respondents who were disappointed by their visit reveals some interesting patterns. First, there was a slightly higher level of disappointment from children *who would not have visited otherwise*. Second, those who had visited just to see *Balamory* were more likely to be disappointed by their visit (34.9%) compared with all other groups. Third, of the respondents stating that they or their children were disappointed by the trip, most had not undertaken much research about the destination before the trip and spent less time than they had expected at the destination. These respondents had not visited other attractions on the Island. A significant number of disappointed visitors were on day visits from home (chi-squared $p < 0.000$), who had in some cases travelled some distance. Finally, the data indicates that there may be some relationship between age of children and disappointment with visit, where those with older children more likely to be disappointed than those with younger children.

Table 3

Visit experience scores

	Percent of respondents stating agree or strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.
Seeing coloured houses was the highlight of the trip for the children	89.5	1.65	0.838
There were lots of things to for children in Tobermory	14.7	3.52	0.922
I felt that Tobermory was a safe environment for my children	61.2	2.46	0.972
I expected there to be more <i>Balamory</i> -related things to do	70	2.17	1.161
My children were disappointed by the trip to <i>Balamory</i>	16.3	3.73	1.122
I was disappointed by the trip to <i>Balamory</i>	28.7	3.41	1.283
We felt welcome in Tobermory	75.8	2.13	0.863
We got good value for money	55.4	2.53	0.954
I thought the <i>Balamory</i> theme was promoted too much	11.6	3.89	0.924
The journey from the ferry took longer than I had expected	24.6	3.60	1.193

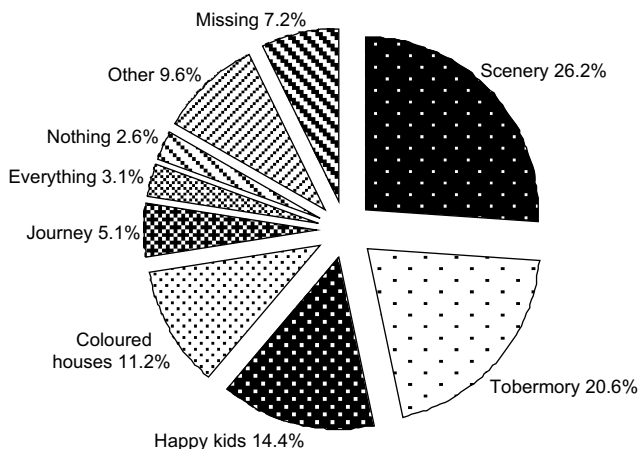
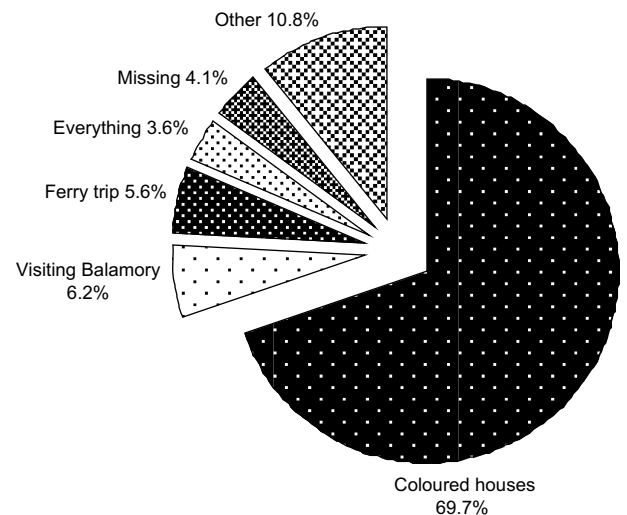
Mean scores on a scale of 1–5, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

Features of the trip that were liked and disliked were ascertained through open questions, directed at the respondent and the children in the group and yielding a diverse range of responses, illustrated in Figs. 2–5. For ease of coding and manipulation, open answers were categorised to form a smaller number of responses. Ultimately, open questioning provides a useful approach as the respondent's views are expressed, revealing both the most positive and problematic areas of screen tourism as perceived by the respondent. Feedback of this nature can help to inform tourism policy and provision, where appropriate, given planning and budgetary constraints and acknowledging that screen tourism may not be an economically sustainable option in the long-term (Riley et al., 1998). Fig. 2 highlights the importance of scenery and place components, although the pleasure induced by seeing children's enjoyment at visiting *Balamory* is clear. For children, seeing the show's icon, the coloured houses, was the highlight of the trip, along with other coloured house-related activities (such as finding the houses or visiting a particular house) (Fig. 3), reinforcing the idea of seeking iconic features in screen tourism.

In relation to aspects of the visit that were liked less, there were many similarities between carers and children's viewpoints (see Figs. 4 and 5). As in most visitor surveys, the least liked feature of the visit was bad weather for both groups. For carers, by far the most significant area of concern was over transport difficulties (length of bus journey, cost of ferry, and rush for buses). In peak season at peak times, lack of capacity was a major problem for local transport providers on Mull, with the increased level of demand that could not be easily accommodated on scheduled services and with a limited fleet. For children, not meeting *Balamory* characters, not being able to go into the coloured houses and not much provided that was to do with *Balamory* were the main areas of complaint.

These findings indicate a need for flexible, innovative and short-term solutions within the destination for screen tourists, but as Connell (2005b) points out, most operators are not prepared to make investments given perceived investment costs and the perceived limited longevity of the product. Indeed, visitor dislikes shared much in common with the concerns of businesses and local residents, many of whom considered some of the existing public sector infrastructure used both by tourists and residents alike to be in need of improvement (e.g. transport services and local facilities such as toilets and play parks) as reported by Connell (2005b). Interestingly, this points to a need for communication between tourists, agencies and the local business sector, as the perceptions of businesses did not necessarily match the views of tourists. Only 17.2% of respondents who suggested screen-related improvements to the destination wanted to see a visitor centre, with the majority desiring to see short-term and relatively simple innovations, such as cardboard cut-outs of characters, characters dressed up, leaflets, quizzes, maps, tours and plaques on the coloured houses. Of the whole sample, 32.3% suggested that improvements to the general infrastructure of the destination were needed such as easier transport and play areas for children.

In making sense of the various features of visits that were liked and disliked by adults and children, a basic frequency analysis of the major aspects (for pragmatism, taken as all responses achieving more than 5%) revealed a useful distinction between destination-related and screen-related components. Table 4 shows that a much higher proportion of aspects liked and disliked by adults were destination-related (e.g. scenery, beach, costs, transport) than screen-related. Conversely, for children a higher proportion of features liked were screen-related. However, dislikes were more

**Fig. 2.** Features of the visit liked most by adults: percentage of respondents.**Fig. 3.** Features of the visit liked most by children: percentage of respondents.

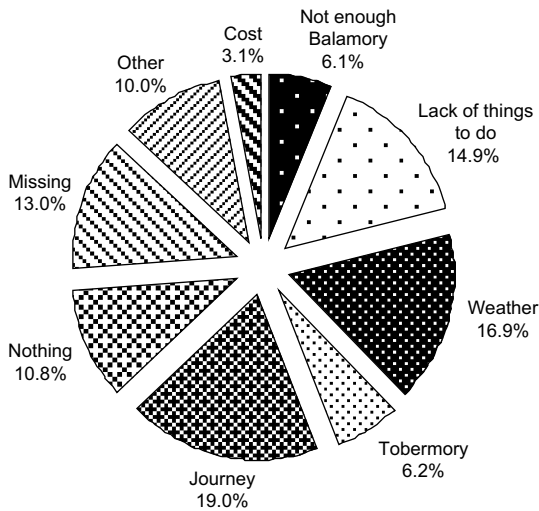


Fig. 4. Features of the visit liked least by adults: percentage of respondents.

likely to be destination-related. While this is a relatively crude measure, it does give an indication of the importance of screen-related elements opposed to destination elements and suggests that an attractive destination with good facilities could hypothetically underpin the success of a screen-induced tourism destination.

4.5. Propensity to return

For the tourism industry, gaining loyal custom (see Petrick, 2004) is an efficient and attractive means of doing business, but a major concern with screen tourism is that it only creates short-term interest. The findings in this study indicate a large proportion of respondents intend to return for another trip (66.5% in total, with 32% stating that they would definitely return). Most encouraging for the tourism sector in this destination, keen to stimulate more overnight stays rather than day trips, is the 15% of respondents stating that they would return for a long holiday (4+ nights), and a further 47% who said they were more likely to return for a short break (1–3 nights). Of those that expressed that they would definitely return, a larger proportion were first-time visitors ($p = 0.05$), and 77.8% of respondents that had arrived specifically to see *Balamory* said that a return visit was likely. A significant relationship was found between those who visited other attractions and the likelihood of a return visit (chi-squared 9.409, df 4, $p = 0.052$).

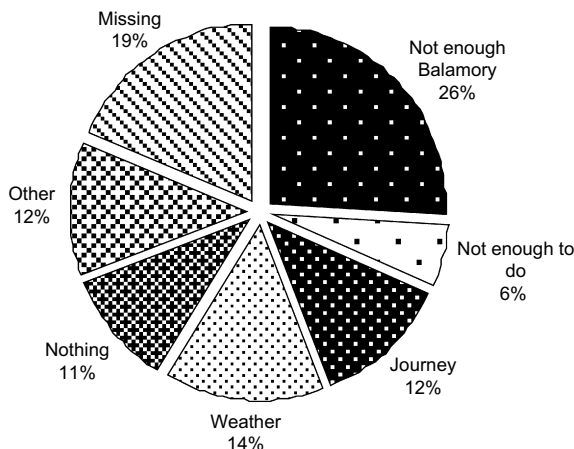


Fig. 5. Features of the visit liked least by children: percentage of respondents.

Table 4

Film-related and destination-related components liked and disliked

Film-related components (%)		Destination-related components (%)	
<i>Adult's likes</i>			
Seeing children's enjoyment	14.4	Scenery/landscape	26.2
Seeing coloured houses	9.2	Walking around Tobermory Beach	11.8 7.2
<i>Adult's dislikes</i>			
		Transport on island	18.5
		Cost	16.4
		Weather	16.4
		Lack of good facilities	7.2
		Lack of things to do	6.2
<i>Children's likes</i>			
Seeing coloured houses	54.9	Ferry journey	5.6
Seeing <i>Balamory</i> village	6.2		
Visiting specific houses	6.2		
<i>Children's dislikes</i>			
No <i>Balamory</i> characters	12.8	Weather	14.4
		Transport and journey	12.3
		Walking up hills	7.2
		Not much to do	5.6

Some 27.9% of those who said that they were disappointed with their visit stated that they would definitely not return for another visit and a significant relationship between 'disappointed with visit' and 'return visit likely' was identified (chi-squared 50.617, df 16, $p < 0.000$). These issues are now further explored through structural equation modelling.

5. Understanding visit experiences, characteristics and propensity to return through structural equation modelling

A structural equation model has been developed using AMOS version 5 to further explore the relationships between visit characteristics, child and adult visit experiences and likelihood of making a return visit to the Island. The underlying constructs were designed in accordance with these research areas with some assistance from exploratory factor analysis. There are numerous goodness of fit statistics for these models, but according to Byrne (2001) the root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) suggested by Browne and Cudeck (1993), the normed chi-square (CMIN/DF) first suggested by Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, and Summers (1977), and the comparative fit index (CFI) suggested by Bentler (1990) are three of the most reliable measures. Byrne suggests that models with a CMIN/DF ratio of between one and two may be considered adequate, provided that fit indices such as the CFI are reasonably close to one, preferably above 0.90. RMSEA values below 0.05 indicate an excellent fit while models with RMSEA values above 0.10 indicate an inappropriate model.

With sample sizes of less than 200, a maximum likelihood analysis must be performed, assuming that the variables all have a normal distribution. However, in this case, most of the variables are measured on an ordinal scale. Correlations are underestimated in this situation so the standardised coefficients (beta weights) displayed in our models are probably underestimated. In the path diagrams of the models straight lines suggest causal links and for the sake of visual simplicity error terms have been omitted from the path diagrams.

To briefly recap, some 34% of respondents said that a repeat visit was probable while 32% of respondents said that it was definite. This left 34% of respondents who were not sure or unlikely to return. Fifty-nine percent of respondents said that they were not disappointed with their trip to *Balamory* leaving 10% who were very disappointed with their trip, 17% who were disappointed to some extent and 10% who were unsure regarding their level of

disappointment. However, it seems that the children were more appreciative of the trip with 68% of respondents claiming that the children were not disappointed with only 6% of children being very disappointed, 10% being disappointed to some extent and 13% unsure. A Wilcoxon Signed Rank test indicated a significant different difference between the views of parent/carers and the views of the children as reported by the parent/carers ($z = 3.972$, $p < 0.001$).

As expected there was a significant relationship between the attitudes of parent/carers and the attitudes of the children (Kendall's $\tau_b = 0.610$, $p < 0.001$). However, there was a stronger correlation with the likelihood of a return visit in the case of the parent/carer's view (Kendall's $\tau_b = 0.297$, $p < 0.001$) than in the case of the reported children's view (Kendall's $\tau_b = 0.253$, $p < 0.001$). This suggested that children's view had an influence on adult's views, but adult views determined whether a return trip would be likely.

Structural equation modelling was used to formulate a model for child and adult disappointment, as well as the decision regarding a return trip. The fit was reasonably good for this model (CMIN/DF = 1.649, RMSEA = 0.058, CFI = 0.90). In this model, shown in Fig. 6, there is an indirect link between children's level of disappointment and the likelihood of a return visit, with mediation by the adult level of disappointment, but there is no direct link between the views of children and the likelihood of a return visit, which was found to be insignificant ($CR = 0.85$, $p = 0.394$).

Other interesting aspects of the model included the variables that weighted more strongly in the prediction of child disappointment than parent/carer disappointment. Two of the variables, "More *Balamory* activities expected" ($\beta = 0.38$) and "Coloured

houses were the highlight for the kids" ($\beta = 0.19$) can probably be attributed to genuine reactions on the part of the children. Children were more disappointed with their trip if they expected more *Balamory* activities and more satisfied with their trip if they loved the coloured houses. However, the inclusion of "*Balamory* promoted too much" and "Good value for money" in the model for children's disappointment seem inappropriate, suggesting that the reported reaction of the children was coloured by the response of parents/carers to these issues. This is confirmed by the direct links between these variables and the likelihood of a return visit. Good value for money certainly increased the likelihood of a return visit ($\beta = 0.35$), in that it was reported to increase child satisfaction ($\beta = 0.24$). However, the over-promotion of *Balamory* appears to have had a slightly positive impact on the likelihood of a return visit ($\beta = 0.10$), despite some contribution to child disappointment with the trip ($\beta = 0.26$).

Interestingly, disagreement with "Lots for kids to do in Tobermory" was more strongly weighted for adult satisfaction ($\beta = 0.23$) than children's satisfaction ($\beta = 0.15$), and the coloured houses, so important to the children also added to adult satisfaction slightly ($\beta = 0.11$), confirming that the reaction of the children was important in shaping adult opinions. However, there was evidence of some disappointment for adults in terms of café facilities ($\beta = 0.10$) and the *Balamory* influence of the visit ($\beta = 0.16$). Overall, it appears that the lower the influence of *Balamory* for the visit, the higher the level of adult satisfaction. As expected, a return visit was more likely if adult disappointment was lower ($\beta = 0.29$) and if *Balamory* was not the only reason for the visit ($\beta = 0.20$), especially when there had been previous visits to Mull ($\beta = 0.23$). The age of the first child was negatively correlated with the likelihood of a return visit, suggesting that a return visit was more likely for those families with younger children.

Overall, the above results suggest that while adult disappointment was strongly related to children's disappointment, it is likely that the adult reaction to prices and *Balamory* promotion coloured the perception of childhood disappointment. The most important variable for predicting whether there would be a return visit was "good value for money". This sends a clear message to tourism operators targeting families with young children both on Mull (for example, Connell (2005b) suggests that several businesses expressed a desire to become more family-friendly by altering their service provision) and more widely. It seems that parent/carers are happy to indulge the kids provided that the price is not too high. However, it is important that the advertising should not be totally dominated by *Balamory*, because satisfaction with the visit and the likelihood of a return visit is likely to be higher if Mull's other attractions are also used to promote the destination.

6. Implications for screen tourism destinations

While there are a few instances of books, film and TV stimulating childhood interest in place (e.g. the *Harry Potter* films and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*), globally the scale of screen-induced 'toddler tourism' generated by *Balamory* appears to be, so far, an isolated case but one which illustrates a range of implications for a screen tourism destination, where on-screen portrayal has influenced new visits and created a new market. The findings of this research raise a number of issues relevant to screen tourism development, management and marketing and highlight what can be learned from the example of *Balamory*.

6.1. Conceptual issues

While this paper does not aim to develop conceptual issues in depth, some points that emerge from this study that confirm existing ideas are worthy of mention. Primarily, *Balamory* as a TV

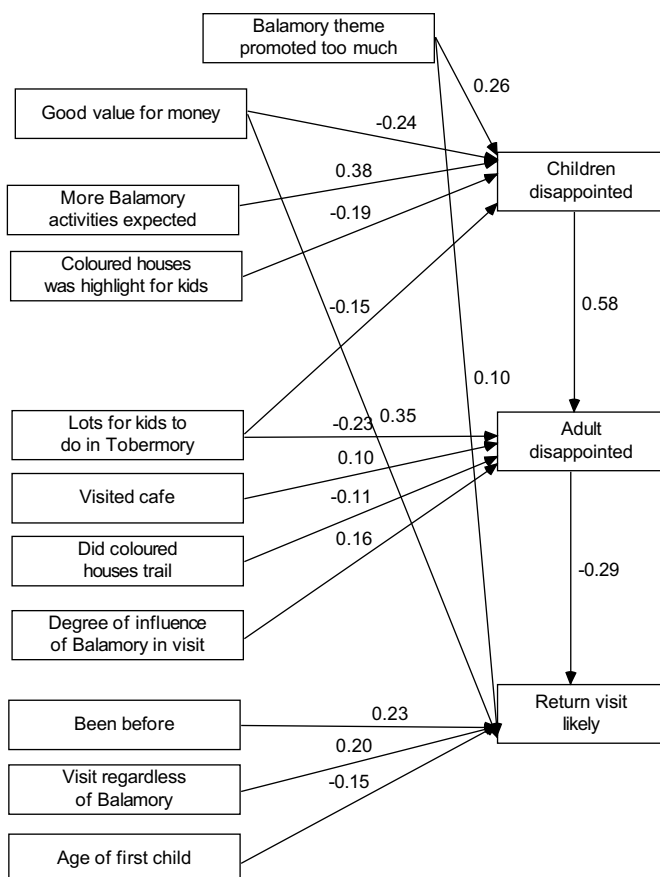


Fig. 6. Model for the likelihood of a return visit – beta coefficients shown at the centre-point of each link. (CMIN/DF = 1.649, CFI = 0.897, RMSEA = 0.058).

programme is place-specific and relies heavily on place imagery. While *Balamory* as a place is an artificial construction, the screen attributes portrayed, such as the exterior of the coloured houses and the landscape setting, are rooted in reality and available for tourist consumption. As discussed in the previous section, not readily available for consumption are the characters and social setting created by the programme. Tobermory is a real community that bears only a visual resemblance to its screen counterpart. For tourists, the translation of *Balamory* to reality is essentially the opportunity to look at the coloured houses used in filming, while experiencing the ambience of the real Tobermory. Supporting *Eco's* (1986) analysis that hyperreality is savoured as an end in itself, conceptions of reality and pretence appear to be mixed for *Balamory* tourists (see also Davin, 2005). This is illustrated in a few open answers given by respondents in the survey, when asked about suggested improvements to the destination: “*be more like the show*”, “*be more realistic to the programme*” and “*make it like Disney*”. Such a finding also confirms the findings of Carl et al. (2007), whose research on *Lord of the Rings* arrived at similar conclusions. For *Balamory* visitors, while place setting was a feature liked by respondents, some screen tourists seek hyperreal experiences. In particular, specific tourists, who are just visiting to see the film location, appear to have much greater expectations of the destination than others. These visitors seek out identifiable locations but find that they are forbidden further interaction, i.e. not able to enter houses, see the characters or visit a themed centre. This created disappointment for a small number of children but, interestingly, a larger proportion of adults.

How might this be explained? If tourism is conceptualised through the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry, 1990), essentially it is a hyperreal experience where, as *Eco* (1986) argues, there is always ‘something to see’. The tourist, and especially the sight-seeing tourist, has become used to experiential-based activities that are produced and packaged, and is well-initiated in the art of passive consumption: indeed, the ‘post-tourist’ relishes simulated environments for what they are (Feifer, 1985). Further, the tourist is drawn to the ‘carnavalesque’: controlled, safe environments designed for the “de-control of emotions...” (Featherstone, 1991: 80). However, the reality is perhaps less intriguing than the imagery, with respondents concerned about issues like value for money, safety, lack of things to do and in particular a lack of screen tourism specific facilities to serve their needs. Indeed, tourist disappointment has been seen in other screen locations: as Gilsdorf (2006) comments on screen tourism in the USA, seeing actual locations can be an anticlimax. The implications of the blurring of reality and fiction in the case of screen tourism highlight potential management dilemmas for screen tourism destinations, which will now be explored in more detail.

6.2. Managing the screen tourism destination

The results of this research indicate that there are several outcomes concerning the screen tourist destination experience and arising management challenges. The survey findings indicate two broad levels of interest.

6.2.1. Acknowledging the toddler tourist as consumer

While this paper is concerned with screen tourist experiences, it is worth briefly noting the existence of the child as a consumer of tourism products and experiences in the case of *Balamory*. In this study, greater visit satisfaction was expressed by parents/carers where children were satisfied, supporting Thornton, Shaw and Williams’ (1997) premise that parents tend to be satisfied when children are happy. Many visits were prompted by a child’s wish to see *Balamory*, while for many parents/carers, the best part of their visit was seeing the look on their child’s face when they saw the

coloured houses for the first time and seeing their child happy. This finding supports Singh and Best’s (2004) research on visitors to the *Lord of the Rings* movie set, where a major motivation to visit was to satisfy children’s interest.

The emergent issue of parent and child perception of experience is an interesting issue for destination managers (including VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise and Argyll and Bute Council) where, in most cases, children were satisfied with the visual experience of seeing Tobermory’s picturesque built environment. Indeed, just going to a real location to see where filming took place is often a highly satisfying experience (Couldry, 1998). Conversely, more parents/carers were less satisfied with the visit, expecting more attractions and a greater level of dedicated screen-related activities, along with good tourist services and facilities. James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) argue that adults and children can understand and enjoy the same kinds of cultural products, but as Davies (2001) highlights, their product experiences are likely to differ. This appears to be the case in relation to screen tourist experiences of Tobermory, where children show a stronger propensity to be satisfied with their visit than their parents/carers, and emphasise connections with the TV show more strongly in what they liked most and least about the visit. While children are only likely to form a small proportion of screen tourists in the global context, the rise of the child as consumer coupled with increasing participation in cinema attendance by young people (see, for example, Film Council, 2007), screen-induced tourism involving children will inevitably occur in other places in much the same way as it has on the Isle of Mull. As an aside, and most interestingly, while other productions since have been predicted to produce a similar screen tourism effect (e.g. Macgregor, 2003), this has not happened. Perhaps this outcome is related to the visual identity and strength of a filming location and its appeal to certain target audiences that results in a desire to see the location, but research is needed to test this idea by identifying the ingredients of the most powerful screen tourist draw.

6.2.2. Recognising types of screen tourists and destination experiences

The research identifies that distinguishing types of screen-induced tourists is important, as the level of expectation and satisfaction can be quite different. This research identifies that the elite screen tourist is more likely to have different perspectives to serendipitous or general screen tourists. Elite screen tourists appear to be more sensitive to the visit environment, seeking out readily consumable products and experiences designed to meet their screen-focused needs. Building on Macionis’s (2004) spectrum, this study indicates the existence of an elite category of specific screen tourist, who visits purely to see the film location. In fact, what the data shows is that those respondents who visited just to see the film location were more likely to be dissatisfied than those who were visiting to see other attractions and places on the Island. What is clear from the results of this study is that screen tourists do seek value for money, where such visitors are more likely to buy screen-related merchandise but not at excessive prices. General screen tourists appear to not like too much promotion of screen-related links (see also the findings of Busby and O’Neill). Indeed, important for the destination is that the lower the influence of a screen product, the higher the overall satisfaction with the visit, and a return visit is more likely. Striking a balance between visitors’ requirements is crucial in this instance, through understanding the existence of types of screen tourists and their subsequent needs. In the instance of *Balamory*, it was found that the numbers of elite and specific screen tourists were relatively large at 34.7% and 36% of the sample respectively, a number likely to be much lower at other film sites, although survey methodologies have yet to be developed to accurately determine relative proportions of types of tourist.

6.2.3. The tourist–destination interface

The overall implications of this research study that are more widely applicable to other destinations relate to the quality and suitability of existing tourism infrastructure, the ability of tourism enterprises and operators to manage tourist flows, the availability of good tourist information, the suitability of marketing campaigns, the development and delivery of screen-related products and experiences and the legacy of screen tourism in creating repeat visits and long-term interest. In relation to the screen tourist, an interpretation of the factors that appear to generate satisfactory or disappointing visits helps to inform the development of principles for managing screen tourism. While the natural and built landscape and setting of the destination is one of the key factors, other features that remain in the control of tourism enterprises and destination managers include the following points.

- Transfer and accommodation of visitors, transportation, site flows and capabilities affect the physical and perceptual carrying capacities of a destination and affect satisfaction. In the case of *Balamory*, over-capacity problems on public transport services to and from the destination were a major issue for tourists, which contributed to disappointment with the visit.
- A further significant visit planning issue identified in this study appears to be the availability of pre-visit information about a screen tourism destination. The data showed that greater satisfaction was expressed where some research had taken place prior to the visit, and where the visitor spent more time in the destination and visited other attractions in the destination that were not screen-related. Consequently, a marketing-led approach is required to ensure that tourists are cognisant with the type of environment that they are visiting, and have easy access to carefully targeted information indicating the types of attractions on offer and the amount of time required for a satisfying visit. Instead of building up expectations beyond that which the destination can provide, essential information to visitors should focus on the *realistic* rather than *idealistic*. However, marketing and promotion are not always necessary to attract significant numbers to screen sites and the marketing process can be by-passed by avid fans. While some fans care little for organised facilities and commoditization, some market segments do expect some degree of service provision, as shown in the case of *Balamory*, and it is these visitors who are harder to anticipate and cater for.
- The data suggested that those who were more satisfied with their visits had explored the destination more widely, rather than simply viewing the filming location. As such, marketing campaigns designed to add to the experience by encouraging specific screen tourists to take long or short breaks would benefit both the tourist experience and the destination economy, compared with a high intensity of consumptive day visits as in the case of *Balamory*.
- In this study, respondents proffered an array of suggestions that would have improved their experience, including the creation of *Balamory*-related features and attractions, such as a dedicated visitor centre, character look-alikes in the town, events and tours, more information, more signs and improved mapping of the coloured houses trail, and other themed activities for children. If destination capacities are likely to be exceeded by demand for screen tourism in the long term, a case might be made for timed and managed tours or an off-site film set. However, capital-intensive adaptations to consumer demand pose financial risks, as well as being unpopular with the local community (Connell, 2005a; Riley et al., 1998), as the longevity of place or screen-specific tourism themes cannot be guaranteed through time. Indeed, in the case of *Balamory*, the BBC announced in 2005 that, after 250 episodes, no more

filming would take place (BBC Worldwide, 2005), which injected doubt in the mind of the local community about the extent to which the programme would continue as a feature of the Island's tourism product. However, the research shows that the majority of respondents that wanted to see more *Balamory* themes did not desire a dedicated visitor centre.

- While this research was unable to test actual repeat visits as a result of screen tourism, some indications of the likelihood of a return visit were ascertained. The proportions of potential return visits as the data indicates are quite high and indicates that if a destination visited mainly for screen-induced reasons has wider appeal that has the potential to draw visitors back, then screen tourism has worked as a tool to sustain visitor activity in the longer-term, creating a legacy. This is particularly the case for *Balamory* given that the programme is aimed at children, who once grown up may wish to reawaken pleasant childhood memories with their families by visiting once again, as suggested by Gitelson and Crompton (1984). As James et al. (1998), Pretes (1995) and Squire (1994) argue, the power of childhood nostalgia in adults can be strong. While research on adult propensity to re-visit childhood holiday destinations is limited, the legacy of *Balamory* might be to attract today's 'toddler tourists' back in future years. These issues are worthy of much greater research attention and clearly present future study opportunities in understanding both screen tourism and family tourism. Certainly, longitudinal studies of screen tourism destinations to establish the longevity of film and TV as a visit motivator are required to confirm or dispute these assertions.

7. Final thoughts: screen tourism research

It is clear from this study, and previous research, that place-specific film and TV serve as a destination attractor, and that a fascination for visual consumption (see Berger, 1972) stimulates and sustains screen tourism as a contemporary tourism phenomenon. To date, much of the work conducted on screen tourism, including this study, takes a case study approach. The consequence of this expanding body of evidence is that the impacts, implications and lessons learned from screen tourism examples are somewhat piecemeal but can be synthesised to form general principles of planning, management and marketing to assist in achieving a balanced and successful destination approach. One of the issues about screen tourism research, particularly in the long term is that gaining accurate data on repeat visits, volume and regularity, while critical in product monitoring and development, is difficult to ascertain. As Oppermann (1998) noted, without this type of information, it is difficult for planners to develop appropriate product offerings and for marketers to package and position the destination to appeal to repeat visitors. While the research presented in this paper goes some way to establishing the experiences of screen tourists and potential for future visits in one destination, further research in time and space is justifiable to confirm, dispute or develop these findings. Results from further research should assist in the development of best practice and policy that destination marketing organisations and host communities can implement if faced with the challenges and opportunities of screen-induced tourism.

However, one of the obstacles to progressing screen tourism research is the major methodological issues in researching the extent to which a screen production influences tourism. Consequently, lack of raw data to justify investment and expenditure by local enterprises by public agencies remains a constraint in screen tourism as a tourism and economic strategy worth pursuing. To this end, much more rigorous longitudinal tracking of the impacts of screen tourism using robust methodology developed at regional or even national levels is needed. The need for methodologies to

isolate, assess and understand tourism activity and impacts is now at a critical point in pushing forward screen tourism as a significant generator of tourism in local areas. With the ongoing interest in screen tourism across the world, such efforts have never been so timely.

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