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WORKING PAPER

The Amazing Race to India: Prominence in Reality Television Affects Destination Image and Travel Intentions

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Abstract

Considering the increasing popularity of reality television shows, this research investigated the impact of a destination placement in reality television on tourism. Two experiments reveal that a reality show can change the image of the destination in which the show is set. This positively affects cognitive, affective and behavioral outcomes. Specifically, it changes perceptions in accordance with the depiction of the destination in the reality show, increases knowledge about the destination, favorably affects viewers' attitude toward the destination, and even more importantly, increases the intention to travel to the destination. Our findings are of interest to destination marketing organizations; they inform them on how to promote touristic destinations.

Keywords

Product placement, reality television, perception, destination marketing

1. Introduction

People have become less inclined to extensively read about touristic destinations, but increasingly prefer audiovisual information sources (Butler, 1990). Destination marketing organizations should thus shift to audiovisual media to promote their destinations, especially because traditional travel advertisements' effectiveness diminishes (Riley & Van Doren, 1992; Vagionis & Loumioti, 2011). The current paper focuses on the viability of increasing interest in a touristic destination through reality TV. Reality television is one of the most frequently watched television programming and its popularity is still growing (e.g., Patino, Kaltcheva & Smith, 2011, 2012; Rose & Wood, 2012). In the top 10 of most watched Primetime TV Programs of 2012 in the United States, five programs are reality programs (Nielsen Media Research, 2012). We show that when a destination is prominent in a reality TV show, this could benefit the perception of, knowledge about, attitudes toward and intentions to travel to that destination.

The current paper contributes to an emerging literature on the appearance of a destination in audiovisual media as a strategy to promote a touristic destination. In particular, the current paper extends prior research in two ways. First, in contrast to prior research that investigated *movie*-induced tourism, the current paper investigates the potential of *reality television*-induced tourism. As reality TV is likely to project a more authentic, but potentially coarser image of a destination, it is unclear whether similar effects are obtained for appearances in reality TV as for appearances in movies. Second, almost all studies on the impact of destination appearance in movies have relied on case studies. To better examine the causal effect of appearance on television, the current paper uses an experimental design. Finally, by viewing destination appearance in reality TV as a form of product placement, we also contribute to the literature on the latter.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Destination Placements in Movies

The inclusion of a destination in movies and television films can induce tourism, and is mentioned in tourism literature as one of the new marketing methods that could compensate for disadvantages of traditional advertising. According to Morgan and Pritchard (1998), destination placement in a film can be considered as the ultimate tourism product placement. Also other researchers suggested that including a destination in audiovisual media can be considered as product placement, which may benefit tourism (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Hudson et al., 2011; Su et al., 2011; Tooke & Baker, 1996). Product placement is the paid visual and/or verbal inclusion of brands in mass-media programming, mostly without consumers' awareness of its commercial intent (Balasubramanian, 1994; Karrh, 1998). Different types of product placements exist. Russell (1998) presents three dimensions along which product placements may vary in intensity: (1) visual appearance, (2) auditory appearance, and (3) connection to the plot or story. Product placements, scoring differently on these three dimensions, have been shown to be very effective at increasing consumers' brand awareness, affecting their brand evaluations and/or changing their buying behavior (Bhatnagar & Aksoy, 2004; Cowley & Barron, 2008; Gupta & Lord, 1998; Law & Braun, 2000; Matthes, Schemer & Wirth, 2007; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998; Roehm, Roehm & Boone, 2004; Russell, 2002; Wei, Fischer & Main, 2008).

Destination placements similarly could benefit the goals of tourism organizations and serve as an alternative to traditional advertising techniques that are becoming less effective. In fact, many studies on film- or movie-induced tourism have examined how the appearance of a destination in a motion picture in cinemas, on television, on video, ... increases a destination's visitor numbers (Beeton, 2001a, 2001b; Connell, 2005; Riley & Van Doren, 1992; Riley et al., 1998; Schofield, 1996; Tooke & Baker, 1996), desire to visit (Beeton, 2004; Hudson et al., 2011) and renders destination

image more positive (Beeton, 2004; Hudson et al., 2011; Kim & Richardson, 2003). Riley et al. (1998) found that certain box office successes can increase tourism for 40% to 50%. For the 12 movies they considered, such increase lasted for at least four years. In general, it appears that movies act as ‘pull’ factors to generate interest and to stimulate viewers to visit places depicted in the movie (Riley & Van Doren, 1992).

On the other hand, destination placement in films or movies could also lead to visitor dissatisfaction (Beeton, 2001b; Connell, 2005; Connell & Meyer, 2009). As destinations are placed in a movie, film or drama series, they run the risk of passing on an unauthentic destination image to viewers as a result of cinematographic editing and visual effects. This may lower visitor satisfaction. For example, the Isle of Mull in Scotland knew a significant increase in visitors after the children’s television program *Balamory* was broadcasted on television (Connell, 2005). However, *Balamory* was artificially created and contained attributes which did not match reality; the only resemblance with its depiction in the program are the colored houses on the island. Such misfits between perception and reality could lead to disappointment with the real location or country (Connell & Meyer, 2009), and maybe even with the television program. Also, for some destinations that undeservedly lack a positive touristic image, either due to their past (e.g., conflicts between Serbia and Croatia) or due to recent unfavorable news reports (e.g., financial crisis in Greece), it might especially be interesting to illustrate themselves as authentically as possible, in order to encourage tourism. To deal with this issue, one may consider promoting touristic destinations through reality TV.

2.2 Destination Placement in Reality TV

Reality shows are “programs that film real people as they live out events (contrived or otherwise) in their lives, as these events occur” (Nabi, Biely, Morgan & Stitt, 2003, p. 304). Reality

shows are a perfect environment for product placements for several reasons. First, reality shows share the advantages of movies and films over traditional travel advertisements. While a traditional advertising spot simply passes a message without tapping into sentiments of viewers and character development (Vagionis & Loumioti, 2011), viewers vicariously consume the movie or television program (Riley & Van Doren, 1992). As such, viewers participate in the place-related experiences and the sentiments of the characters (Kim & Richardson, 2003), which leads to more focused attention and long-term memory effects (Riley & Van Doren, 1992).

Further, viewers are longer exposed to a destination placement in a movie than to a 30-second spot or print ad (Riley & Van Doren, 1992). The same advantage holds for reality television. Moreover, possible re-watching of movies or television programs on DVD, digital television,... may produce even longer-lasting effects; visitors may be attracted years after the release of the movie (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Riley et al., 1998; Vagionis & Loumioti, 2011). Although re-watching may be less likely for reality shows, long-lasting effects may also result if the same destination is placed in the different episodes and seasons. Further, in contradiction with traditional advertising, most viewers are not aware that they are being persuaded by a product placement in a movie, drama or reality show (Balasubramanian, 1994; Bhatnagar, Aksoy & Malkoc, 2004; Wei et al., 2008).

Finally, the target audience of the promotion of touristic destinations in movies is much wider than of traditional tourism advertisements and promotions (Riley & Van Doren, 1992), even though destination placements are generally less expensive than tourism advertisements. While a wider audience is not an aim in itself of a marketing campaign, because of it, destination placements have the potential to raise interest in a destination among people who are not necessarily the target audience of traditional tourism advertisements. At the same time, however, it is important that the destination placement continues to reach the target audience of traditional tourism advertisements, or on the balance fewer people may be persuaded to visit a given destination. In this respect, the fit between the content of a television program and the destination may be crucial. Indeed, the content of

a show may attract a specific audience. For instance, people with a sentimental nature are more likely to watch romantic television programs (e.g., *The Bachelor*), whereas people who like backpacking and traveling may rather watch adventurous travel programs (e.g., *The Amazing Race*). So, one way to ensure one does not lose the traditional ad's target audience is by selecting a program of which the content (and the corresponding audience interests) matches the destination. For instance, the Seychelles Islands, which are a romantic location, are preferably inserted in a romantic program like *The Bachelor*. By contrast, India, which is a more adventurous location, is preferably placed as a challenging environment in an adventurous travel program like *The Amazing Race*. As such, an adventurous traveler is likely to watch *The Amazing Race* and is then likely to consider India as a potential, adventurous travel destination. Finally, another way to continue reaching the traditional advertising audience is by prominently inserting the destination in the program, or even in the title of the program. For instance, if a program is titled *The Amazing Race To India*, people who are interested in travelling to India may be likely to watch the program, even if the program content does not appeal to them 100%.

In addition to these advantages over traditional advertising, reality shows also have some advantages over movies and soap operas to promote products and touristic destinations. First, reality shows are less expensive than movies and films since these shows need no actors or writers, have smaller crews, and visual editing is less elaborate. Hence, reality-induced tourism can be especially helpful for economically lagging destinations that are not capable to invest in effective advertising campaigns (Hudson et al., 2011). The second and most important advantage refers to reality shows' potential to satisfy a constant quest for authenticity in a postmodern world (Rose & Wood, 2005). Reality shows can convey an authentic image of the "product" (e.g., a destination in our case) to viewers. Although viewers generally know that settings and situations in reality shows can be contrived, that the people are carefully selected, and that many of the events or stories featured on the shows are staged (e.g., Hall, 2006; Lundy, Ruth & Park, 2008), it is especially the quest for

authenticity that makes people watch reality shows (Rose & Wood, 2005). Specifically, people are generally aware of the fact that reality television is not “real” as it does not present life as most people experience it, but they do consider it as “real” as it focuses on common, authentic people playing themselves (Hall, 2009). That is, cast members are real in that their behavior is unscripted, which therefore expresses their authentic character, skills and personality (Hall, 2006). As viewers are looking for authenticity in reality television, the program format may benefit from the expectation of conveying an authentic image of the location in which the program is set. When viewers perceive the portrayed destination image as authentic, they likely exhibit higher levels of cognitive involvement (Hall, 2009) and may therefore be more likely to extend their knowledge about the destination, which in turn may benefit destination marketing organizations.

Although alternative “real” programming, such as news programs, talk shows and documentaries also meet people’s desire for authenticity, most reality shows share an extra advantage: their narrative context and the depiction and development of common, authentic characters engaging in common and uncommon tasks. This gives viewers the chance to identify with the participants and to vicariously consume the location in which the show is set. As vicarious experience is suggested to be an important determinant of movie-induced tourism (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Riley & Van Doren, 1992), reality television seems to represent an ideal balance: it depicts a rather authentic image of a destination, and still enables viewers to vicariously visit the destination. The current paper investigates whether destination placement in reality TV may indeed be used to promote touristic destinations.

2.3 Case Studies Versus Experimental Designs

Prior research on destination placement in movies and television has been mostly based on case studies (e.g., Tooke & Baker, 1996). For instance, Riley and Van Doren (1992) have reported

that, following the release of the motion picture *Dances with Wolves*, visitation numbers of Historic Fort Hayes (Kansas) featured in the movie increased by 25%, which exceeded the average 6.6% increase in the most recent years prior to the release. Even more spectacular, the year after the release of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), visitor numbers of the Devils Tower National Monument, featured in the movie, increased with 74% compared to the year before. Moreover, when the movie was aired on television in 1980, again a 39% increase in visitor numbers was found compared to the preceding year. Finally, 11 years after the movie's release, 20% of the visitors still attributed their destination knowledge primarily to the movie.

While such cases are suggestive of the value of destination placement, they preclude definitive causal conclusions regarding its impact on tourism. For instance, destination placement may have spurred management of the featured touristic destinations to advertise more aggressively, which, in turn, may have affected visitor numbers. In addition, case-based research may have focused on several convincing results, thereby overselling the impact of destination placement on tourism. Unfortunately, compared to the rather large amount of case studies, experimental studies are scarce. To the best of our knowledge, only two studies have investigated the impact of films on a destination experimentally. Kim and Richardson (2003) either exposed participants to the movie *Before Sunrise* or not. Compared to the control group who had not seen the movie, the experimental group showed changes in both cognitive and affective components of the destination image consistent with the content of the movie, and increased interest in visiting the destination. Hudson et al. (2011) did not use a control group but simply measured the image of and intentions to visit South America before and after exposure to the movie *Motorcycle Diaries* set in that continent. They found significant changes in the perception of South America and the desire to visit increased significantly. So, while both studies demonstrate the effectiveness of destination placement in *movies*, because of the differences between movies and reality shows, neither of these studies allow conclusions regarding the effectiveness of destination placement in *reality shows*.

In this study, we use an experimental design to study the effectiveness of destination placement in reality shows. Doing so, we contribute to the literature not only by focusing on a format for which destination placement has not been studied yet, namely reality shows, but also extend the scarce literature on destination placements that is built on experimental research rather than on case studies. In our study, we combined the experimental methods of Kim and Richardson (2003) and Hudson et al. (2011) by using both a between subjects and a within subjects design. As a consequence, we eliminate possible disadvantages associated with the use of either design. By conducting these experiments, we are likely to control for possible interfering variables, which is important to isolate the effects of the reality show on tourism.

3. Hypotheses

The goal of the current paper is to test the potential of destination placement in reality TV to promote touristic destinations. In contrast to movies and films with their cinematographic manipulations and visual editing to create mysterious, unrealistic settings, reality television has the potential to communicate a more authentic image of the location in which the program is set. We especially assume that viewers will consider the depiction of a destination in a reality program as a rather authentic representation and, consequently, have their perceptions of the destination considerably influenced by the reality show. This implies that their perceptions may change in accordance with the depiction in the reality show. As such, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H1: Exposure to a destination in a reality show will change people's perception of a destination consistent with what is depicted in the show.

Prior literature has shown that destination perception or image is a multidimensional concept that is formed by both cognitive and affective dimensions (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu &

McCleary, 1999; San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). The cognitive dimension refers to an individual's beliefs or knowledge about the destination's attributes, whereas the affective dimension refers to an individual's feelings toward the destination (e.g., Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Chen & Uysal, 2002; Gartner, 1993; Holbrook, 1978). Research has shown that the cognitive dimension can be influenced by external information sources (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1993): either by symbolic stimuli (i.e., marketing communications) or by social stimuli (i.e., word-of-mouth) (Um & Crompton, 1990; Um, 1993). Hence, we expect that reality television, as a symbolic stimulus, could enhance knowledge about the destination as viewers will perceive the information about the destination provided by the reality show as authentic information and use it to extend their knowledge about the destination. As such, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H2: Exposure to a destination in a reality show will increase people's knowledge of the destination.

Next to the cognitive dimension of a destination image, also the affective dimension of a destination image is expected to be influenced by a destination placement in a reality show. Prior research has clearly shown that product placements often affect the attitude and behavior toward the product in a positive manner, and has put forth several mechanisms to explain this influence (e.g., mere exposure (Auty & Lewis, 2004; Law & Braun, 2000; Matthes, Schemer & Wirth, 2007; Russell, 2002), classical conditioning (Balasubramanian, 1994; Russell, 1998;), social learning (Russell & Stern, 2006; Russell, 1998), and so forth). Moreover, Kim and Richardson (2003) found that vicarious experience with a destination through characters in a movie influenced affective components of a destination image. Given these consistent findings and the possibility of reality television to induce vicarious consumption, we propose that a destination placement in reality television could render attitudes toward the destination more favorable. Hence, we hypothesize the following:

H3: Exposure to a destination in a reality show will render people's attitude toward that destination more favorable.

Finally, we expect a destination placement to change behavioral intentions toward the destination as well, since travel intent is generally determined by cognitive and affective evaluations (Baloglu, 1999). Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Exposure to a destination in a reality show will increase people's intention to travel to the destination.

4. Methodological Framework

4.1. Design

To investigate the change in perception, cognition (i.e., knowledge about the destination), affect (i.e., attitudes toward the destination), and behavioral intention (i.e., travel intention), we ran two experiments. Experimental studies enable us to detect a causal relationship between destination placement and altered perceptions, cognitions, affect, and intentions. As such, our goal is to more formally establish the eclectic findings that have been suggested by case studies. The first experiment used a within subjects design, in which participants had to fill out a questionnaire both before and after exposure to the stimuli. The second experiment used a between subjects design with two conditions. Specifically, participants in the experimental condition were exposed to a reality show comprising a destination placement (cf. stimuli), whereupon they had to fill out a questionnaire measuring the DVs. In the control condition, participants only completed the questionnaire without being exposed to the destination placement first. Overall, these two experiments created three groups to which participants were randomly assigned.

The advantage of using both a between subjects and a within subjects design is that the one can compensate for the disadvantages of the other. Specifically, the within subjects design compensates for potential initial group differences in a between subjects design, whereas a between subjects design compensates for potential carry-over effects of the pretest on the posttest in a within subjects design.

4.2 Stimuli

Different subgenres of reality shows exist, for example reality crime shows (*e.g.*, *Cops*, *America's Most Wanted*), gamedocs (*e.g.*, *Survivor*; *The Amazing Race*), dating (*e.g.*, *The Bachelor*), talent shows (*e.g.*, *American Idol*), ... (Nabi, 2007). For reasons of practicality and delimitation of our research scope, this research focuses on one subgenre. The subgenre we focus on has to meet two requirements: (1) it includes a destination placement, and (2) the reality show is perceived as authentic. Hence, we decided to use a gamedoc which combines characteristics of a documentary and a game show (Couldry, 2004). Specifically, we will use a Dutch gamedoc called *India Celebrity Express*, which is based on the format of the American reality show *The Amazing Race*. Specifically, it is a race in which couples travel by hitchhiking, having only one euro a day. They have to rely on the local population to find a place to sleep, transportation and food. The goal of the game is to reach a specific end destination as soon as possible. In our experiments we used one season of the reality show, named *India Celebrity Express*, in which the couples are Dutch celebrities that have to travel through India. Although this specific choice limits the generalizability of our findings, it increases the internal validity of our design.

This show is filmed in a foreign country, and the image of the country that is conveyed resembles reality. The unknown environment in which the race takes place is an important element of the reality show, though the emphasis is on the game which makes that the destination is not the primary point of attention. Hence, as India is not integrated in the reality show with the intent of

promoting the country, possible influences of the show on perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, and travel intention with regard to the country are unintentional effects.

4.3 Procedure

To cover up the research aim, participants were told that they were part of a test panel for *India Celebrity Express*; the production company needed the opinion of a Belgian test panel because it allegedly was planning to reproduce the season *India Celebrity Express* in Belgium with Belgian celebrities.

Participants in the within subjects experiment (i.e., group 1) and participants in the experimental condition of the between subjects experiment (i.e., group 2) were invited to watch the nine episodes of *India Celebrity Express* on five evenings spread out over three weeks. Participants watched the whole season instead of a short compilation of the episodes in order to increase the validity of our results. They had to watch the season of *India Celebrity Express* in an auditorium. Obviously, while this is not a natural viewing situation, it still reflects reality to a higher extent than viewing in an experimental lab setting as the former situation might simulate a movie theatre experience.

Prior to watching the episodes, participants in the within subjects experiment completed a questionnaire measuring target variables (i.e., perceptions of India, knowledge about India, attitudes toward India, and intention to travel to India) among other control questions such as their television viewing behavior (i.e., channel preference, favorite television genres, the extent of watching reality television, the attitude toward reality television, and the knowledge of and interest in Peking Express). At the end, some socio-demographics were asked, such as age, sex, education and place of residency. This questionnaire was also administered to the participants in the control condition of the between subjects experiment (i.e., group 3), whereas those in the experimental condition completed

an abbreviated form of the questionnaire, measuring all the same variables, except for the target variables involving India.

After each episode, all participants (except those in the control condition) completed a questionnaire asking their opinion on the quality of the episode, the candidates, the presenter, etcetera. In essence, these questionnaires were designed to increase the credibility of the cover story. Finally, all participants (except those in the control condition) completed a final questionnaire which was similar to the questionnaire that was used as the pre-measure in the within subjects design. That is, perceptions of and attitudes toward India, knowledge about India and the intention to travel in India were assessed. In addition, we included a question measuring the general attitude toward product placement. Finally, some socio-demographics were asked. The entire research was conducted in Dutch.

4.4 Measures

The variables that serve as the DVs in our experiments were measured as follows:

Perception of India was assessed by statements, such as “In India, poverty is prevalent,” “In India, everyone is equal.” Perception was measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = “totally disagree,” and 7 = “totally agree”). With this measure, we assessed the change in perceptions of India.

Knowledge about India was gauged by 19 multiple choice questions, such as “What is the capital of India?” with Bombay, New Delhi, Calcutta, and Bangalore as the choice options. *Attitude toward India* was assessed by statements on the country in general, its culture and its population. Examples of statements are: “India is a beautiful country,” “The Indian culture is interesting,” “Indians are hospitable.” Participants had to indicate on a seven-point Likert scale to which extent they agreed with these statements (1 = “totally disagree,” and 7 = “totally agree”). Finally, *travel intention* was measured by one item (“I would like to travel to India once (again)) on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = “not at all,” and 7 = “very much”).

4.5 Participants

Belgian participants were selected to watch the Dutch reality show that had only been broadcasted in the Netherlands. As such, we reduced the likelihood that prior watching could bias the results. Only 5.3% of the participants reported to have seen an episode of *India Celebrity Express* before and they were excluded from the analyses.

In the within subjects experiment, twenty-five people participated. These participants were all students ($M_{\text{age}} = 21$; 64% women). In the between subjects experiment, forty-seven Belgian students participated ($M_{\text{age}} = 21$; 70% women). As our samples consist of students, the generalizability of our results may be limited. However, young people are an important target group of reality shows (Patino et al., 2011, 2012) which makes a student sample appropriate for this study.

In both experiments, respondents participated in return for a monetary fee or course credit. All participants were informed in advance that they would be part of a test panel for *India Celebrity Express*. As such, people who do not like the program were less likely to participate, which resulted in a kind of self-selection that makes the sample more representative of the population that is watching the program at home. Indeed, only four participants (5.6%) indicated not to like watching the program.

4.6 Analytical Method

As we deal with quantitative data and adopt a positivist approach, we used statistical analysis methods to analyze the data. Overall, we used t-tests because our dependent variables were measured on interval- or ratio-level. Specifically, we used paired samples t-tests in the within subjects experiment, as we compared data of the same participants before and after exposure to the reality show. In the between subjects experiment, we used independent samples t-tests, as data of two independent groups of people were compared. To test the hypotheses, we used a 5%-significance

level. On occasions where a 10% -significance level was used, this was indicated by using the term ‘marginal significance’.

5. Results

4.2.1 Perception and Knowledge of India

First, we investigated how the perception of India had changed due to watching India Celebrity Express. Rather than trying to compose a global perception score, we consider each item as separate measure of perception as all items tap into a different aspect of a country’s image. It appears that participants’ image of India changed after watching *India Celebrity Express*. Specifically, in both experiments India became more to be seen as a man’s world in which masculine characteristics are valued more than feminine characteristics, as a country with traffic chaos, where few civil wars are raging and where it frequently rains. In addition, in the within subjects experiment, after exposure, participants also had a lowered perception of crime rate, whereas in the between subjects experiment, exposure led participants to also perceive India as a highly polluted country where poverty is prevalent, hygiene is lacking, and animals freely roam the streets. We observed no changes in perceptions regarding India’s economy, the extensiveness of its railway network, the equality of its civilians, the importance of the individual (vs. group), its cultural heritage, and the extent of the penetration of Western culture. Tables 1 and 2 provide a more detailed overview of the results of the mean perception scores for respectively the within subjects and between subjects experiment. In sum, we can conclude that certain perceptions regarding India’s image have changed due to watching *India Celebrity Express*, which supports H1.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

To assess potential changes in knowledge, the number of correct answers on the knowledge questions about India was determined. Conducting a paired samples t-test on the data gathered for the within subjects experiment indicates that knowledge is significantly higher after ($M = 13.83$) compared to prior to the exposure to the destination placement ($M = 12.43$; $t(22) = -2.49$, $p = .021$). Analyzing the data gathered for the between subjects experiment points to a similar effect. Participants knew significantly more about India in the experimental condition ($M = 13.39$) compared to in the control condition ($M = 9.81$; $t(42) = 3.74$, $p = .001$). Overall, these results yield clear support for H2.

4.2.2 Attitude toward India and Travel Intention

Based on the responses of the participants in the within subjects experiment, two mean attitude scores were calculated; one based on the pre-measurement ($\alpha_{pre} = .91$) and one on the post-measurement ($\alpha_{post} = .85$). A paired-samples t-test comparing both means indicates that the attitude toward India was more favorable after watching *India Celebrity Express* ($M = 5.01$) versus before watching *India Celebrity Express* ($M = 4.69$) ($t(24) = -4.05$; $p < .001$). A similar result was obtained in the between subjects experiment. After computing an overall attitude score for each participant ($\alpha = .89$), an independent samples t-test comparing the mean attitude in the control condition to the mean attitude in the experimental condition indicates that the attitude was more favorable if people had watched *Peking Express* ($M = 4.89$) compared to when they had not ($M = 4.54$) ($t(45) = -2.04$; $p = .047$). So, in support of H3, the attitude toward India became more favorable after watching the reality show.

When looking at the specific items that were used to measure the attitude toward India, its culture and its population, we find that after watching *India Celebrity Express* (1) attitudes toward the country in terms of colorfulness, exoticism, interestingness, atmosphere, (2) attitudes toward the culture in terms of openness, interestingness, difficulty to fathom, and (3) attitudes toward the

population in terms of hospitality, egoism, warmth, hedonism, helpfulness, generosity, faith, impertinence, and friendliness, are more favorable. In contrast, in terms of quietness, the attitude toward the country and the population became less favorable, in that India and its inhabitants are considered less quiet and more noisy after watching *India Celebrity Express*. Although this may point to a negative effect of destination placement, this finding may also be considered as an indication that attitudes became more realistic. Tables 3 and 4 provide a more detailed overview of these analyses for, respectively, the within and between subjects experiment.

Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here

Finally, the intention to travel to India also increased after exposure to *India Celebrity Express*. Specifically, both in the within subject experiment as in the between subject experiment we find the intention to travel to India is higher. Whereas the mean intention to travel to India was 5.44 prior to watching *India Celebrity Express*, it rose to 5.88 after watching it ($t(24) = -2.86, p = .009$). In the between subjects experiment, two outliers were identified in the experimental condition. They reported a travel intention that was lower than the mean minus two standard deviations. More specifically, they indicated that they really did not want to travel to India once. In the control condition, no such people were detected. To avoid differences in types of participants between the control and experimental condition, we excluded those outliers from the analysis. We found that explicit travel intention increased marginally significantly ($t(33.71) = -1.88; p = .069$) when people watched *India Celebrity Express* ($M = 5.75$) versus when they did not ($M = 4.90$) This provides support for H4.

6. Discussion and Implications for Academics and Practitioners

First, both experiments suggest that participants changed their perception of India after watching the reality show. In particular, the perception of the aspects that were highlighted in the reality show changed significantly in line with the depiction of the destination. For example, the fact that the contestants sometimes spent the night with poor families probably changed the perception of poverty in India. Decreased perceptions of civil wars or criminality may be due to the fact that the reality show did not highlight these aspects. As reality shows are known for their authenticity, destination placement in a reality show can lead to altered perceptions of a destination compared to placements in fictional shows or movies. Another medium that can provide authentic information is traditional advertising, though people are not likely to expect advertising to convey authentic information. Advertising is more likely to elicit skepticism or resistance than destination placement, especially in reality shows.

Second, the reported studies are the first to investigate the effect of destination placements in reality shows on destination knowledge. The results indicate that people knew more about India after watching *India Celebrity Express*. A reality show thus may serve as a learning platform through which potential tourists can learn more about a destination and become more familiar with that destination. Their potential to profoundly increase destination knowledge might render destination placements more effective as a marketing tool than traditional media. Specifically, other than traditional travel advertisements or brochures, destination placements do not lack time and/or space to provide a substantial amount of information about a destination. However, we acknowledge that destination information delivered by reality shows may not always be correct. Consequently, factual destination knowledge is not always augmented. Eventually, this may even harm destination marketing organizations.

Third, after watching *India Celebrity Express* people had a more favorable attitude toward India. More specifically, the reality show had a positive influence on viewers' overall attitude toward the country, the culture and the population, although the authentic depiction of the destination also

caused some specific aspects to suffer. In particular, India and its inhabitants are perceived as less quiet and more noisy after watching the reality show. While this may seem a negative consequence of destination placement, this actually signifies that the reality show depicted India in an authentic way. In fact, prior research suggested that portraying the destination authentically may be crucial to avoid tourist dissatisfaction. However, this authentic depiction might harm destinations which differ in a rather negative way relative to the country in which the reality show is broadcasted. Hence, these destinations should be cautious with promoting their touristic destinations in a reality show. For example, destinations where hygiene is lacking, criminality is prevalent, and terroristic attacks occur frequently better think twice before attracting production companies that want to shoot a reality show. Fourth, this research shows that the reality show had a positive influence on viewers' intention to travel to India.

Following the diminishing effectiveness of traditional travel advertisements and the increasing popularity of reality television shows, this research demonstrates the impact of reality television on tourism. It contributes to both academic literature and practitioners' knowledge. Concerning the former, we particularly contribute to product placement, reality television, and tourism literature by considering the placement of a destination in a reality show as a product placement and showing its impact on viewers' perception and knowledge of the destination, attitudes toward the destination and visitation likelihood. By doing so, we broaden the scope of media-induced tourism from movie- and drama-induced tourism to reality show-induced tourism. Reality television is especially interesting because it could overcome the problem of visitor dissatisfaction as a result of an unauthentic destination image. Moreover, we contribute to tourism literature in a methodological way by using experimental designs instead of relying on case studies and anecdotal accounts. This enabled us to isolate the causal effects of the reality show on tourism from other potential influences.

This research has implications for practitioners as well. For destination marketing organizations, benefits could prevail when they invest in reality shows, like for example gamedocs, in

their country or in local destinations. As in most product placement agreements, it can be a win-win situation for both producers and destination marketing organizations, as destination marketing organizations could benefit from the promotion of their destination and pay for it by financing part of the production. Interestingly, reality shows are even less expensive than fictional content. Especially destinations that are economically lagging can thus use this relatively inexpensive marketing tactic to promote their destinations as a touristic attraction. Also destinations with an undeserved negative image due to their past or to recent news messages can attract foreign production companies to shoot a reality show on their location to depict a more truthful image. This can reset their image, once tarnished by war, economic downturn, rebellion, terroristic attacks, etc.

7. Conclusion and Future Research

Overall, two experiments (i.e., a within subjects and a between subjects design) reveal that a reality show can change viewers' perception of the destination in which the show is set. Specifically, it can change viewers' perception in accordance with what is depicted in the reality show. Moreover, a reality show can increase knowledge about the destination, positively affect viewers' attitude toward the destination and even more importantly, increase their intention to travel to the destination.

Interestingly, although the effects were generally positive, some aspects of perception and attitudes toward the destination were influenced in a rather negative way. This implies that destination marketing organizations should keep in mind that the way in which their destination is depicted could definitely determine the direction of effects on perception, attitudes, and travel intentions. Indeed, dependent on which specific aspects of perceptions or attitudes that are negatively affected by the reality show, general perceptions, attitudes, and travel intentions could decrease rather than increase. For example, more knowledge about important negative characteristics of a

destination, such as a low level of safety, could negatively affect the general perception, attitudes and travel intentions toward a destination. Moreover, destination marketing organizations should not only consider the way in which their destination is depicted, but also the context in which the destination is placed. That is, destination marketing organizations preferably choose a program of which the content fits in with the destination, such that people interested in the program content are more likely to favor the destination. However, the advantage of fit between content and target audience interests and between content and destination is merely an assumption and is not directly tested in this research. Further research could examine these issues more in depth.

Moreover, all participants in this study were students. Although this is a very adequate choice for our research, from a theoretical point of view it is interesting for future research to examine whether the effect of reality shows on destination promotion might be moderated by age or education. Perhaps, older people's attitude toward and perception of a destination is already more developed and stable, which makes it harder to influence these by destination placement in a reality show. Moreover, older people might have developed more persuasion knowledge (Friestad & Wright, 1994), which enables them to watch the reality show through a more skeptical lens. Besides, since our sample mainly contains university students, it is interesting to study whether the effects of reality shows are different for less educated people. Perhaps, less educated people are more absorbed by reality shows, which can imply even stronger effects.

As previously stated, different subgenres of reality television with different characteristics exist (Nabi, 2007) and subgenre may moderate the effect of destination placement. For instance, for some reality shows, the perceived authenticity of the depicted events may be low; such skepticism in viewers may limit the change in perception, knowledge, attitude and travel intention, and may even damage the image of a certain destination. Further research should scrutinize possible differences between types of reality shows, and identify drivers of these differences.

We mentioned earlier that both symbolic and social stimuli can form the cognitive dimension of a destination image (Um & Crompton, 1990; Um, 1993). As the media landscape has become highly diversified, not only reality television, but also other, new symbolic media can serve as relatively cheap vehicles to communicate information about a destination and help form an authentic destination image. Considering the growth of product placements in computer or video games (Nelson, 2002), destination marketing organizations may as well benefit from a destination placement in a video game. Instead of depicting an authentic image of the destination, game designers can depict the destination as is preferred by the marketers. This may be a good solution for countries that differ in a rather negative way from international standards in terms of hygiene, safety, etc. Next to symbolic media, also new social media can serve as communication channels for destination marketing organizations. By means of buzz marketing, destination marketing organizations can reward trendsetters in any kind of community to post pictures or comments of their destinations on Facebook, Twitter, etc.

From the perspective of product placement research, academics and practitioners should further consider different types of destination placements in reality shows. As mentioned in the literature overview, product placements can differ along three dimensions, among which the degree of plot connection (Russell, 1998). In this study, the destination placement was highly connected to the plot as many assignments and competitions somehow related to India, and the name of the destination even appeared in the title of the season (i.e., *India Celebrity Express*). Conversely, in other reality shows, a destination may simply be a subtle background setting and hence, be not connected to the plot at all. This could inhibit the effectiveness of the destination placement. Yet, subtle product placements have been shown to positively affect attitudes and behavior through mere exposure effects (Cowley & Barron, 2008; Law & Braun, 2000; Matthes, Schemer & Wirth, 2007). Therefore, it seems interesting to further investigate the effectiveness and the processes that may drive potential effectiveness of different types of destination placements in reality shows.

Finally, investigating the placement of products rather than destinations in reality shows may also be interesting. Though this is not directly scrutinized yet, product placement in reality shows might pay off to a larger extent than in fictional programs. What is known is that the commercial break audience during reality television is smaller than during drama, even though both programs have an equal program audience (Schweidel & Kent, 2010). That is why, especially during reality shows, marketers might regard product placement as a good alternative to traditional advertising in commercial breaks. The reported research already demonstrates the value of product placement in reality shows by showing its effect on tourism.

6. References

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Appendix: Means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis, to test for normality

Attitude toward India	WITHIN SUBJECTS (BEFORE WATCHING)				WITHIN SUBJECTS (AFTER WATCHING)				BETWEEN SUBJECTS (CONTROL GROUP)				BETWEEN SUBJECTS (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)			
	M	SD	Skew -ness	Kurto -sis	M	SD	Skew -ness	Kurto -sis	M	SD	Skew -ness	Kurto -sis	M	SD	Skew -ness	Kurto -sis
India is a pleasant country.	4.64	1.11	.01	.27	4.88	1.30	-.99	-.01	4.10	1.45	-.07	.28	4.27	1.59	-.29	-.86
India is a colorful country.	5.72	.89	-.16	-.60	6.32	.56	.01	-.57	5.38	.86	.15	-.38	6.12	.59	-.01	.14
India is an attractive country for tourists.	4.76	1.13	-.05	-.78	4.68	.80	-.38	.03	4.48	1.33	-.30	-.31	4.08	1.49	-.14	-.61
India is a clean country.	2.80	1.29	.78	.31	2.88	1.39	.83	.25	2.81	1.12	.88	2.16	2.38	.98	.49	.62
India is an unsafe country ^f .	4.12	1.05	.44	-1.02	3.76	1.13	-.05	-.78	4.19	1.36	-.25	.75	4.15	1.16	-.16	-.75
India is an exotic country.	5.16	1.18	-.34	-.41	5.64	.76	.11	-.26	5.52	.98	-.25	-.83	5.42	.95	-.99	1.88
India is a beautiful country.	5.60	1.00	-.16	-.92	5.92	1.07	-2.22	6.90	5.43	1.08	.20	-1.27	5.85	1.05	-1.03	.98
India is an interesting country.	5.88	.93	-.09	-1.21	6.28	.68	-.41	-.68	5.38	1.02	.05	-1.05	5.96	1.15	-1.81	4.65
India is an atmospheric country.	5.32	1.11	-.30	-.81	6.12	.60	-.03	.02	5.19	1.33	-.67	.19	5.77	1.03	-.21	-1.13
India is a quiet country.	3.40	1.29	.93	1.79	2.44	1.04	.89	.21	3.29	1.55	.62	.27	2.54	1.02	.37	-.04
The Indian culture is difficult to fathom ^f .	4.44	.65	.24	.08	4.56	1.19	-.63	-.13	4.67	1.32	-.76	1.79	3.81	.94	-.53	-.37
The Indian culture is interesting.	5.76	.78	-.11	-.25	5.96	.74	.06	-1.04	5.29	1.15	.04	-.62	5.92	.80	.14	-1.38
The Indian culture is an open culture.	4.32	1.03	1.03	.80	4.84	1.03	.60	-.19	3.57	1.21	.95	1.96	5.12	.99	.28	.16
Indians are hospitable.	4.76	1.05	.06	-.44	5.56	.82	.53	-.50	4.67	1.06	.48	-.38	5.65	.85	.33	-.79
Indians are egoistic ^f .	3.16	.99	-.35	-.64	2.32	.75	.03	-.613	3.33	.97	-1.13	-.03	2.42	.95	.55	.94
Indians are warm people.	4.92	.86	.16	.66	5.48	.77	-.52	-.15	4.81	1.03	.12	-.21	5.31	1.26	-1.42	4.49
Indians are hedonists.	3.88	1.13	.25	-.78	4.80	1.08	.65	-.21	4.24	1.34	.07	-.02	5.12	1.03	.46	-.92
Indians are helpful.	4.76	.83	.50	1.33	5.36	.57	-.14	-.56	4.81	.87	.90	.32	5.23	.99	-.24	-.30

Indians are noisy ^r .	4.12	.93	.09	.53	4.92	1.32	-.90	-.68	4.33	1.46	.42	-.53	5.15	1.12	-.14	-.48
Indians are very generous.	4.32	.75	1.98	6.16	4.80	1.29	-.35	.21	4.38	1.07	.48	1.49	5.23	.95	.10	.51
Indians are very devout.	5.72	.94	-.71	-.17	6.40	.65	-.61	-.76	5.52	1.21	-.62	-.76	6.19	.80	-.37	-1.32
Indians are impertinent ^r .	3.16	.90	-.34	.24	2.88	1.01	.26	-.48	3.57	1.25	.08	.30	2.88	1.48	1.58	3.21
Indians are cheerful people.	4.48	.82	.31	-.28	4.88	.97	.26	-.89	4.81	1.08	-.38	1.31	4.62	1.02	.39	-.19
Indians are friendly.	5.00	.82	.50	-.04	5.52	.87	-.07	-.56	4.95	.80	.73	.70	5.23	1.03	-.03	-.34
Indians are lazy ^r .	3.04	1.10	-.29	-.99	2.96	1.34	-.04	-.49	3.00	1.00	-.66	-.54	3.31	1.26	.02	-.34

Perception of India

In India, a lot of poverty is prevalent.	5.76	.66	-.629	1.11	5.96	.54	-.05	.98	5.33	1.11	-.50	.35	6.08	.69	-.10	-.72
In India, everyone is equal ^r .	2.32	1.07	.624	.16	2.16	1.07	1.00	.81	2.71	1.23	.43	-.75	2.19	.98	.96	1.42
India is a man's world.	4.64	1.11	-.58	-.21	5.16	1.14	-.34	-.84	4.76	1.18	-1.31	4.68	5.88	.86	-.57	.04
In India civil wars rage frequently.	3.68	1.07	.04	-.37	3.16	1.18	.33	-.17	3.95	1.02	-.83	2.75	2.81	1.17	-.09	-1.72
In India, a lot of criminality exists.	4.44	.77	.22	-.07	3.80	.96	.43	-.33	4.33	1.11	-1.23	3.01	4.00	1.17	-.49	-.15
In India, animals roam freely on the streets.	5.36	.64	-.47	-.54	5.76	1.13	-.81	.04	5.24	1.09	-1.29	2.67	5.85	1.05	-.80	.63
In India, the individual is more important than the group.	3.16	.99	-.63	.25	2.88	1.05	.03	-.77	2.86	1.06	-.24	-1.32	2.69	1.41	1.06	1.89
In India, there is no lack of hygiene ^r .	3.08	1.35	.61	.36	3.00	1.58	.76	-.54	3.86	1.35	.15	-1.08	2.73	1.59	1.13	1.06
In India, there is few traffic chaos ^r .	2.40	1.35	1.60	4.37	1.64	.76	1.36	2.55	2.67	1.11	.26	-.54	1.65	1.50	2.98	8.59
In India, there is a lot of pollution.	5.08	1.26	-.44	-.95	5.04	1.37	-1.03	.15	4.90	1.26	-.63	-.05	5.69	1.26	-2.11	7.02
India has a flourishing economy ^r .	4.00	1.32	.24	-.16	4.08	1.32	.20	-.44	3.90	1.45	.40	-.54	3.92	1.41	-.04	-.64

Western culture has heavily influenced India.	4.16	1.25	.37	-.01	4.08	1.32	.43	.34	4.14	1.24	.23	.27	3.77	1.42	.44	.06
India has few cultural heritage ^f .	2.36	1.35	1.59	2.70	1.88	.83	.71	.14	2.19	1.25	.45	-1.49	2.12	1.56	2.55	6.57
In India, it rarely rains.	3.52	1.26	-.18	-.67	2.32	1.28	1.92	4.18	3.14	1.20	-.30	-.90	2.38	1.24	.43	-.97
India has an extensive railway network ^f .	3.60	1.00	-.16	.36	3.44	1.04	.41	.08	3.86	1.28	.61	.62	3.31	1.52	.70	.23
Explicit travel intention	5.44	1.45	-.77	-.15	5.58	.79	-.18	-.98	4.90	1.76	-.51	-.43	5.38	1.70	-1.51	1.79
Knowledge about India	12.64	3.76	-.03	-1.47	13.83	2.31	-.28	-.46	9.81	3.47	1.02	1.92	13.39	2.87	.11	-.24

^f: reversed items; means displayed in this table are based on the original item scores. To calculate the composite measure, we recoded these items.