

# Beyond the imaginative threshold?: Transmediality and immersion in film-induced tourism

ROSS GARNER \* [garnerrp1@cardiff.ac.uk ]

**Keywords** | Transmedia, film-induced tourism, media image, media tourist

This paper contributes to theoretical debates concerning film-induced tourism and the sense of connection and immersion sought whilst visiting filming sites by examining two examples of recent strategies related to these areas (one industrially-located, the other initiated by tourists). Previous work in Cultural Studies has focused on the blockages to immersion that film-induced tourists encounter during their self-organized trips, such as the mundanity of locations and the presence of other non-fans at the site, and so theorized the experience as liminal (Brooker, 2005). In contrast, this paper builds upon the recognition that tourists seek an “imaginative sense of immersion between [...] participants and fan object” (Garner, 2016, p. 5) and connects this with ideas concerning paratextuality (Gray, 2010) and transmediality (Jenkins, 2006) to argue that forms of publicity and/or technology can enhance the film-tourism experience.

Immersion is a concept which has arisen in relation to discourses of transmediality but, to date, this has been discussed in relation to the type of viewer engagement that cross-platform texts encourage (Evans, 2011). The first part of this paper instead offers a new theorization of the intersection between transmediality and film-induced tourism by drawing upon the former’s focus upon extending narrative worlds (Evans, 2011, pp. 95-96), as well as the blurring of the diegetic and the non-diegetic (Evans, 2011, p. 25), and combining this with definitions of immersion as a screening out of one’s immediate distractions (Ryan, 1995). Bringing these ideas together, the paper will argue that an immersive experience in film-induced tourism can be encouraged by negotiating discourses mobilised both before and during the tourist’s visit.

To illustrate these arguments, the second part of the paper explores these ideas in an applied manner by focusing on two different cases: official framings by the regional tourist board Visit Cornwall in the UK that relate to BBC period drama *Poldark* (2015- ) and film-induced tourist habits concerning scene-framing. Regarding *Poldark*, Visit Cornwall has produced a website and map (<https://www.visitcornwall.com/poldark/blog/poldark-film-locations>) that combines strategies of programme- and place-branding to advise potential tourists about the show’s filming locations. Approaching these sources as what I will call ‘threshold paratexts’, and combining this analysis with examples

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\* **Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies** in the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University.

of how the map and Poldark tourism have been framed in the UK press, I argue that immersion is here coded as an expectation as potential tourists are invited to recreate the show's narrative pleasures. What this publicity material therefore anticipates is an unbroken and isolated engagement with the show's filming locations and its narrative world – one that seeks to remove signifiers of the 'present day'.

In contrast, the final part of this paper argues that the scene-framing behaviours of contemporary film-induced tourists, where visitors to sites take photographs of the media image within the location visited, approach immersion in an alternative manner. This is because these practices seek to collapse together the embodied space and its fictional referent in one image, overcoming potential blockages and distractions encountered on-site by momentarily combining the diegetic and extra-diegetic and so blurring the boundaries between these to enhance the affective connection.

Ultimately the paper argues that analysing these examples, and approaching the media tourist experience from perspectives of immersion and transmediality, has potential benefits for both academics and interested stakeholders such as tourism marketers. For scholars, this approach introduces a new way of theorizing the film-induced tourism encounter by relating this to recent positions within media and cultural studies and offering an alternative way of accounting for the relationship between pro-filmic locations and contemporary media consumption habits. For stakeholders, these ideas may also provoke reflection upon how ideas concerning technology, immersion and transmediality can be incorporated into the design and marketing of film-induced tourism.

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