“Lights, camera, action...!”
Marketing film locations to Hollywood

Simon Hudson

University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, USA, and

Vincent Wing Sun Tung

University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to understand and identify the marketing strategies and specific promotional tools used by film commissions to attract the production of films and television.

Design/methodology/approach – This study involved in-depth interviews with film commissions worldwide and a content analysis of their promotional materials.

Findings – Film commissions employ three key strategic marketing approaches when promoting their locations to film producers - product differentiation, service differentiation and cost advantages. They use six main specific promotional tactics – advertising, sales promotions, joint promotions, public relations, online marketing, and direct marketing and personal selling. A model explaining the relationship between film commissions and film producers involving these strategies and promotional tools is suggested.

Research limitations/implications – The marketing of film locations is under-researched and has to be further addressed in the marketing literature. Future research can seek to identify the specific marketing activities that will lead to success for the marketing of film locations.

Practical Implications - Examples of the best marketing practices amongst film commissions are highlighted.

Originality/value – This is an original contribution in that it is the first academic paper to address the marketing of film locations. It will be of significant value to film locations seeking to attract production to their locations.

Keywords Film commissions, Locations, Film producers, Marketing strategies, Promotional tactics, Marketing

Paper type Research

Introduction

The structural landscape of the film industry is changing, with producers constantly trying to reduce production costs without sacrificing realism (Weinstein and Clower, 2000). Technological advances in recent decades have made this proposition achievable as it is often less expensive to film outside of Hollywood at various “runaway” locations (Scott and Pope, 2007). As a result, runaway locations (hereafter referred to as “locations”) are vying for a portion of the 600 to 800 feature films that are shot worldwide each year. With an average budget of \$64 million per film, film productions create significant economic benefits for host regions. Film production can also have a positive impact on tourism as viewers seek to visit locations they have seen on the big screen (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006). Overall, many countries view the film industry as a significant producer of quality jobs in the 21st century (Blair and Rainnie, 2000) given the shift of the economy from a labour-oriented structure to a more creative and knowledge-integrated framework (Arai, 2005; Wong, 2008).

It is not surprising therefore that many regions now actively seek film production, with the job of attracting filmmakers to a region usually being the responsibility of film commissions, organizations funded and affiliated with local government bureaucracy. There are hundreds of film commissions all over the world and one for each state in the US. Despite the amount of literature recognizing the significance of the film industry on local economies, how film commissions, working in an increasingly competitive marketplace, and often with extremely limited budgets, promote their locations to producers in Hollywood is an important topic, but is one that has yet to be addressed in the marketing literature.

This paper begins with a review of the literature related to film locations and destination marketing, identifying the important relationships between the film industry and the marketing of locations. A methods section is then followed by a detailed discussion of the results, and the paper concludes by outlining the implications of this study.

Literature Review

In the 1980s, entertainment industry analysts began to refer to a so-called ‘new Hollywood’, in contradiction to the old Hollywood that had thrived over the pre-war decades on the basis of the classical studio system of production. One significant new trend emanating from this new Hollywood was the geographic decentralization of film-shooting activities away from the core complex of Hollywood (Christopherson and Storper, 1986; Storper and Christopherson, 1987; Scott, 2002). This decentralization occurred for two main reasons, one being the search for realistic film locations, and the other being the search for reduced production costs. Firms engaging in these two types of decentralization are these days referred to as ‘creative runaways’ and ‘economic runaways’ respectively (Monitor, 1999), or simply ‘runaway productions.’ Today, a primary strategy of production centres outside of Hollywood is a combination of qualified but low-cost production labour and investment and production incentives that considerably lower production costs for producers (Christopherson, 2002). Table 1 gives some examples of tax incentives currently on offer from film commissions around the world.

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Another factor responsible for the location of production outside of Hollywood is the increased competition amongst regions (Christopherson, 2003). The number of film commissions around the

world has seen a steady increase over the last 20 years, and all of them are vying for film and television production – production that can bring significant economic impact to a region (Weinstein and Clower, 2000). How film commissions promote their locations to producers has yet to be addressed in the marketing literature, although the subject of destination or place marketing has received increased attention over the last decade or so. A fair proportion of destination marketing tends to be carried out by public sector bodies, and hence it tends to be quite complicated. These public bodies are often involved in destination marketing for a wide range of reasons that might include improving the image of an area in the hope that this will encourage industrialists to relocate their factories and offices to the area; providing jobs for local residents; increasing the range of facilities that are available for the local community; and trying to make the destination politically more acceptable.

However, the main thrust of destination marketing is to increase tourism. Nearly every state, province, and territory now has a separate body that is responsible for marketing their destination to tourists (Gauldie, 2000). Nationally, organizations such as the Australian Tourist Commission, the British Tourist Authority, and the Canadian Tourism Commission are investing heavily in tourism marketing and development. Also, at a state or province level, marketing agencies spend millions of dollars promoting tourism. Their marketing programs target both individual travelers and travel trade intermediaries, and often they enter into cooperative marketing with suppliers, carriers, intermediaries, and other destination marketing organizations (DMOs) (Middleton and Clarke, 2001). The promotional campaigns of most DMOs fall into three main categories: traditional image or brand-building campaigns, which aim to build or/and maintain awareness of the destination; strategic campaigns, aimed, for example, at attracting visitors in the shoulder season; and ‘damage control’ campaigns typified by Thailand’s promotional campaign that followed the Tsunami in 2004. Most destination marketing organizations are involved in a range of promotional activities which include using brochures, advertisements, public relations, personal selling, sales promotions and trade fairs and exhibitions (Hudson, 2008).

In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, the need for destinations to create a unique identity—to differentiate themselves from competitors—has become more critical than ever. In recent years, there has been an acknowledgement that a successful destination brand needs to convey the expectations, or promise, of a memorable travel experience that is distinctively associated with that destination (Blain, Levy and Ritchie, 2005; Knapp and Sherwin, 2005). This ‘experience branding’ serves to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination, and reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk, translating into a unique selling proposition and a corresponding increase in tourist spending (Blain *et al.*, 2005). The Australian Tourism Commission were one of the first to treat their destination as a brand, and have for many years been branding their tourism experience – one that suggests a welcome that will be warm, distinctive and authentically Australian.

Recently, tourism officials in Australia invested millions of dollars promoting their country on the back of the new blockbuster *Australia* that debuted in cinemas in November 2008. The movie, starring two of Hollywood’s biggest stars, Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman, was directed by Baz Luhrmann. The new branding campaign, conceived and produced by Luhrmann himself, ran for several months in Tourism Australia’s international markets, to coincide with the world-wide marketing and release of the movie. With its dramatic locations and stunning cinematography, Australian tourism officials hoped that the movie would make audiences all over the world fall in love with Australia and help to make the country a highly fashionable tourism destination. But this is not the first time a destination has sought to leverage film for tourism purposes. The power of film and television in promoting destinations and stimulating tourism demand is an international phenomenon (Connell, 2005), and the subject has

received increased attention from both academics (Beeton, 2005) and practitioners. Despite the fact that DMOs cannot usually be selective of films being produced, they can be proactive in promoting their locations to film producers, and research has shown that DMOs that collaborate with film commissions are likely to be more successful attracting film tourists (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006). Most destinations have a short-term focus that facilitates film production, concentrating on the associated economic impacts (Croy and Walker, 2003), but an increasing number are becoming active in encouraging producers to make films in their region in order to benefit from the long-term tourism impacts.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are twofold: first, to understand the marketing strategies film commissions employ when they promote their locations to film producers, and second, to identify the specific promotional tools used by film commissions in order to attract the production of films and television.

Method

Most film commissions belong to the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI), the professional organization for film commissions who assist film, television and video production throughout the world. To capture the marketing practices of film commissions, a database of commissions who were actively promoting their locations was compiled and contacted. Specific emphasis was given to the commissions nominated for the 2006 and 2007 AFCI Marketing Awards (see Table 2). Each year, the AFCI gives out Marketing Awards to recognize a wide-variety of creative marketing initiatives. Award recipients were interviewed and key concepts were explored as to understand the marketing strategies used to attract film producers. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The representatives of each film commission were predominantly directors and coordinators responsible for the marketing efforts of the commission to film producers. The scope of the responses represented an international consortium with 19 commissions in the United States, five in Canada, one in the United Kingdom, two in New Zealand and Australia, and one in Jordan, Korea and Hong Kong.

Consistent in exploratory studies using in-depth interviews, film commissions were asked open-ended questions relating to the marketing techniques, evaluation procedures, and the perceived successes of their efforts. In addition, film commissions were asked to describe and define the key marketing strategy that they felt were paramount to their success. Follow-up probing questions were used to encourage respondents to think more deeply by inquiring *why* the marketing strategies they described were important. To ensure consistency in the interview process and data collection, one researcher conducted all the interviews minimizing the risk of interviewer bias. Relevant quotations from these interviews are included in the results section.

Furthermore, content analysis of promotional material used by AFCI film commissions was also conducted. This included studying print advertisements, location guides, DVDs, websites and brochures. Content analysis uses an objective, systematic approach to measure the meaning of communicated material through the classification and evaluation of selected words, themes or concepts. Content analysis has evolved since its introduction in the 1920s, largely in social science applications and has great promise as a tool for analyzing promotional material (Fletcher, Witt and Moutinho, 1994) and lends itself well to examining language in written documents (Krippendorff, 1980). The results of the content analysis were discussed by both authors in an attempt to perform analytical triangulation as to minimize subjectivity in the analysis process (McIntosh and Siggs, 2005; Patton 1990).

INSERT TABLE 2

Results

Film Location Marketing Strategies

As identified in the foregoing literature review, location and destination marketers between them employ two key marketing strategies— low cost and product differentiation. Using these two strategies as the initial dimensions for data analysis, the in-depth interviews actually revealed three similar strategic marketing approaches that film commissions employ when promoting their locations to film producers - product differentiation, service differentiation and cost advantages. Here, it is important to note that film commissions view product differentiation and service differentiation as separate, distinct value-added marketing strategies that can attract film producers. The content analysis of promotional materials identified six main marketing tactics used by film commissions: advertising, sales promotions, joint promotions, public relations, online marketing, and direct marketing.

Figure 1 provides an integrative framework outlining the three marketing strategies and six promotional tactics that film commissions employ. At the top of the model, film commissions promote their locations to film producers, who themselves sit at the bottom, and in between are the three strategies and the various promotional tools used by film commissions to attract producers.

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Product Differentiation

Firstly, product differentiation has the potential to assist commissions in gaining a competitive edge. The essence of an effective strategy is to create a niche position by delivering a unique set of activities and core competencies that competitors have difficulty emulating (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Porter, 1996). Some film commissions have a strong portfolio of one specific type of location, and have been able to differentiate themselves in that way. Queensland, Australia, for example, has positioned itself as a leading destination in the world for film directors seeking a jungle location. In the Southern states of the US, historic federal buildings are often promoted to producers. Successes include the leasing of the US Post Office Courthouses as a location for the motion picture *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, and as a setting for *Leonard Bloom* in Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina respectively. The Bahamas promotes itself as an expert in production facilities involving water. The \$10 million water tank that the commission built has lured not just one, but two of the three instalments of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise. However, some commissions have found it challenging to differentiate themselves based on production facilities alone. “Defining our niche in this marketplace is extremely challenging especially as we don’t have sound stages and large production facilities”, (Jacqui Wood, Executive Manager, Film South New Zealand).

Service Differentiation

Film commissions also promote their services as much as their physical locations (Goldsmith and O’Regan, 2005). Highlands and Islands Film Commission in Scotland for example, has spent the last four years promoting a Film Crew Welcome Scheme, aimed at building a network of hotels, guesthouses, caterers, transport companies and film production crews able to service the needs of the most demanding Hollywood director. Wales too, emphasises its quality of service. “One of the key aspects of

film commission work is to build confidence and trust among producers who expect a high level of support service when working away from their usual base", (Mike Wallwork, National Coordinator, Wales Screen Commission). New York has a 'Concierge Service' available to productions that supports the entire production cycle. This includes story development support and tie-ins to NY agencies, scouting assistance and budget analysis, locations access to premium sites, hotel, car rental, and vendor discounts, assistance in sourcing pre-production office space, and assistance with global premiers and launches.

In certain areas, niche labour and expertise can offer commissions particular advantages. Previous research suggests that localities would be best served by focusing on the development of creative talent as well as building linkages with existing technology-based industries (Weinstein and Clower, 2000). The Calgary area in Canada prides itself on having an ample supply of trained horses, riders, equestrian equipment and western sets to be able to host western films and TV series successfully. "We work with the Alberta Film Commission and the various directors' and producers' guilds to attract film productions. We created a film friendly community to attract film productions. We then use our website and extensive tourist marketing to increase awareness of the filming activities in our town", (Drumheller Tourism, Alberta, Canada).

Cost Advantages

Unlike the early 1980s when location was the primary consideration for film production, a large number of film commissions clearly perceive their cost advantages as the new competitive advantage (Christopherson, 2006). States campaign heavily for their legislatures to improve financial inducements. "In the past they would call and say, 'Do you have 1940s general store, a 1930s lighthouse, an ultramodern office building, a Victorian train station?' Now the location takes a back seat to the economics", (Steven Gorelick, Associate Director, New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Commission). In order to help producers keep costs down, commissions often offer incentives such as cash back and income or corporate business tax breaks (See Table 1). To ensure production of the 2007 movie, *Gracie*, New Jersey offered a tax credit of more than \$1 million, a \$1.5 million loan guarantee on a \$4.5 million loan - in addition to a \$500,000 loan that did not have to be paid back until November 2008. The independent film's budget was \$9.5 million. According to Andrew Shue, lead producer for *Gracie*, the producers used the tax credit money to shoot two extra days and pay for music rights for its soundtrack.

In 2006 Connecticut launched its 30 percent tax credit program for productions spending a minimum of \$50,000. Simultaneously, New Mexico increased its production incentive to a 25 percent rebate on state taxes, also giving up to 25 percent back on actors' salaries. "We just hosted a movie starring Russell Crowe. We'll give that production up to \$5 million towards his and other actors' salaries. It's a great way to bring in large budget movies", (Lisa Strout, Director, New Mexico Film Office). Keeping up with the Joneses, New Jersey offers a 20 percent tax credit, more than its prestigious neighbour, New York, which offers only 15 percent. Producers have to spend 60 percent of all expenses in the state, less post-production costs in order to qualify for the 20 percent credit.

Promotional Tools Employed

In addition to adopting three broad strategic approaches, film commissions actively promote their location advantages to producers using various communication tools. The interviews and content analysis revealed six main tactics – advertising, sales promotions, joint promotions, public relations, online marketing, and direct marketing and personal sales (see Figure 1).

Advertising

While film commission advertising makes use of all of the main media, the key vehicles used are print and electronic media advertisements and brochures. Outdoor advertising is not used frequently, but there are some examples of commissions using billboards to advertise. Illinois Film Office for example, placed a billboard in Los Angeles on top of the building where film permits were obtained to encourage movie executives to shoot their next film in Illinois. The same film office had a prominently displayed sign at the Los Angeles Forum, where many studio executives go to see the LA Lakers' NBA games.

Film commissions tend to use a few common advertising execution styles. Some use straightforward, factual messages conveying information without any gimmicks, emotions, or special effects. South Carolina Film Commission ran some ads in 2007 that simply said, "Forget tax credits. We pay cash." Others use humour as a creative strategy. Wichita Film Commission won an AFCI award for its black and white print ad that used humour to get the reader's attention. Alongside a picture of a group of cowboys on horse being filmed, the tagline read: "Shoot 'em up....we'll take care of the rest." Film Monterey created a humorous, oversized pig as its mascot in order to promote Monterey County as a desirable film location.

However, the majority attempt to convince producers that their location can be a back-drop for almost anywhere in the world. New Brunswick Film for example, developed a campaign called *Call us a Chameleon* in 2005 and the headline for one of its print ads was "New Brunswick or New York?" referring to the fact that the Canadian province could easily work as a back-drop for New York. El Paso Film Commission used the headline, "Are you looking for Mexico in the United States?", in one of its postcard advertisements. The British Columbia Film Commission's promotional piece, *A World of Looks*, is another example as is the 2007 print ad from Montana Film Office saying, "Leave Your Passport, Bring Your Imagination." This same strategy is clear from other film commission branding campaigns, including the *Land of 10,000 locations* (The Minnesota Film Board), *You Belong Here* (FilmOntario) and *Endless Possibilities* (South Australia Film Corporation).

The most popular medium used by film commissions is the production guide. For many commissions, the design, production, and distribution of their production guide and/or location brochure is the most important and expensive item in the marketing budget. An effective brochure will use informational appeal to emphasize hard facts and logic (Cheon, Cho and Sutherland, 2007). However, commissions have to be creative in order to differentiate their guides from those of competitors. El Paso Film Commission's guide has a tasteful beige leather cover, the idea being that recipients will keep the cover when the manual is expired, and replace it the following year with the updated manual. The manual is divided into three main sections; detailed information on local crew, location pictures and a quick reference guide at the end. The location brochure produced by the Royal Film Commission of Jordan (RFC) is also unique, and includes information on Jordan as a tourist and culturally rich destination, a map of the Kingdom, information on the RFC and a multi-media CD. The design encompasses the Jordanian spirit with earthy tones emphasized by the rosy red hues of Petra.

However, the position of the brochure as a major medium is being threatened by new technology, such as CD-ROMs, DVDs, and the Internet. Some film commissions do not solely send out paper copies of their production guides any more, instead also relying on DVDs or downloadable guides accessible from their websites. El Paso Film Commission has a printed brochure but also supplies a five minute movie on a CD-ROM that focuses on its locations (divided into nine different themes). The

Tampa Bay Film Commission also sends out a DVD with its printed brochure that is divided into five sections: downtown, design, homes, parks and unique localities.

One of the most effective marketing tools available to film commissions is photography. In order to convince producers to film at locations, most commissions create a photo library of all the kinds of locations available. The El Paso Film Commission guidebook has a separate section with various location pictures along with a CD that is available on request. South Carolina produced glossy booklets entitled, *A Place Where Stories Are Told*, that contained photographs of their film locations along with quotations from films like *Forrest Gump* that have been made in the area. Other commissions are creating online photo libraries to entice productions. North Wales Film Commission has an online database of 30,000 film locations. In 2006, the Commission, working together with other partners, launched an online Movie Map that traces the footsteps of Hollywood stars. This online scheme provides a guide to over 30 different filming locations visited on both big and small screens, including films starring actors such as Sir Anthony Hopkins and Demi Moore. "It is increasing the awareness about North Wales. There is a heritage of film making that's been going on for the last half a century", (Dewi Davies, North Wales Film Commission).

Sales Promotions

Sales promotions are not commonly used by film commissions as part of the marketing mix, but they do often use specialty advertising. Specialty advertising presents the commission's name on something that is given away as a reminder such as calendars, hats, pens, T-shirts, mouse pads, and water bottles. The ideal specialty is an item kept in the open where other people can see it, such as a coffee mug. Film commissions have used a variety of specialty items to promote their services, from caps (in the case of Placer-Lake Tahoe Film Office), to T-shirts (Gyeonggi Film Office), to branded cocktail napkins (Pennsylvania Film Office). "The hats were extremely popular with our clients. We still get requests for these hats from those who've shot here before and are now on another shoot or from those who've seen their friends with them. Definitely in some eyes, it is a collector's item", (Beverly Lewis, Director, Placer-Lake Tahoe Film Office).

Joint promotions

Film commissions may work together on joint advertising campaigns, an example being the initiative between national and regional film offices in New Zealand. A print campaign (ads were placed in *Locations Magazine*) advertised the services of New Zealand's national film office, but also indicated collaboration with the country's regional film offices. Commissions may also partner with other industry sectors in promotional efforts. In 2003, the Highlands and Islands Film Commission joined with the Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board, Best Western Hotels and British Airways to put on a series of promotional events during the week-long World Travel Market in London. Other commissions convince players in the hospitality industry to get involved in attracting film production. The Wyoming Production Incentive Program lists businesses that offer a 10 percent discount on Wyoming services targeting production companies. Through partnerships with hotels, restaurants and other production services, this program is seen by the film office as one way of attracting producers. Similarly, New York City's "Made in NY" incentive program includes a discount card available to productions shooting in the city, providing discounts and special offers when presented to participating vendors, including hotels, car rental, banking services, and production services.

Film commissions are also partnering with destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in order to encourage film production in their regions. Tourism practitioners are witnessing an increasing

number of tourists seeking to visit locations featured in television and film, and are seeking to capitalize on this growing phenomenon. *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy provided a good reason for government agencies (including Tourism NZ and Trade NZ) along with Film New Zealand to work together on a coordinated strategy. The government invested up to NZ\$7.5 million on projects to promote New Zealand through the release of each of the three films, and the Prime Minister personally endorsed the branding of New Zealand 'Home of Middle-earth' (New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2002). In the Bahamas, where the film commission is under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry is involved immediately it receives a script. The Bahamas realized the potential of promoting tourism through films after the Beatles filmed, *Help!*, there in 1964. More recently, it invested \$16 million on the film *After the Sunset* in order to ensure maximum exposure for the island. The Australian Tourism Commission (ATC) became the first DMO to try promotion through an animated film when it collaborated with Disney on *Finding Nemo*. In Georgia recently, the government agreed to offer an extra 10 percent tax credit to filmmakers if the production includes a short promotion touting the state (Armstrong, 2008).

Public relations

Many film commissions are proactive in generating publicity for their efforts. In 2003, the Hong Kong Film Services Office (HKFSO) ran a successful publicity campaign – involving HKFSO, leading actress Angelina Jolie of *Tomb Raider 2* and a local charity, Po Leung Kuk – that demonstrated the integrity of the city's film industry. Using a creative relations approach, a cheque presentation ceremony was organized in which Jolie, on behalf of Paramount Pictures and herself, donated a cheque of HK\$200,000 to Po Leung Kuk as a gesture of appreciation to the support and facilitation the HK Government had given on the filming of *Tomb Raider 2*. Public appreciation was also considered as Henry Tang, the city's former Financial Secretary, thanked citizens for their understanding of the inconveniences created during the filming.

Other PR techniques are available to film commissions, including press releases and press conferences. In 2004, the Northern Ireland Film and Television Commission (NIFC) held a press conference at the Cannes film festival to announce a new production fund that would attract more filmmakers to use Northern Ireland locations as well as skilled workers. "This is the first time that Northern Ireland has had the opportunity of going to the Cannes film festival and saying something really positive. We are going to say 'we've got money and we want to give it to you'", (Colin Anderson, Chairman, NIFC).

Many commissions leverage travel trade shows, exhibitions, or conventions to gain publicity. To promote Hong Kong to overseas producers, HKFSO regularly participates in many trade shows and film festivals including the AFCl and the BIFCOM Locations Trade Shows, and the Berlinale and Cannes Film Festivals. At the Cannes Film Festival in 2007, HKFSO provided its publicity material for industry access at the pavilion organized by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council. The pavilion presented a platform for producers to discuss film financing, production and promotion. In addition, a series of press conferences and parties were organized and attended by a roster of the city's high-profile directors and stars. Film commissions can also draw attention by arranging or sponsoring special events. Montana Film Office sponsors a breakfast for young filmmakers at the annual Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, and North Dakota hosts the Northern Lights reception at trade fairs for former North Dakotans who work in the film industry.

Some commissions rely on published communication materials to reach and influence their target markets. An example of an innovative publication was the Film South Telegraph produced by Film

South New Zealand. The Telegraph is a free publication in newspaper-format that contains articles of the film office's latest works with photographs of New Zealand's incredible landscape. Published specifically for the Locations Trade Show in 2006, the Telegraph was a giveaway to ensure that the office could reach as many trade show visitors as possible. At the Trade Show, 1200 copies were given out in addition to those distributed to other regional film offices and visiting filmmakers at local screen industry gatherings and business seminars. "We considered it to be a good brand exercise, plus better value for our minimal marketing budget", (Jacqui Wood, Executive Manager, Film South New Zealand).

A final PR tool at the disposal of film commissions is the familiarization trip (commonly referred to as a 'fam trip'), a popular method used to expose a product to intermediaries in the channel of distribution. Film commissions might offer trips to filmmakers to experience the benefits of the proposed site. They may also bring to the attention of film writers and/or producers stories or legends from their destination's contemporary or past history that portray their destination in a positive light. An example was the Northern British Columbia Film Commission's locations tour of 2006, encouraging location managers and producers from Vancouver to come to Prince George.

Online marketing

The use of internet marketing as a communication medium has exploded in the last decade with current research now related to improving the effectiveness of website designs as well as online communities and experiences (Schibrowsky, Peltier and Nill, 2007). Film commissions are increasingly turning to the Internet to promote their locations. The British Columbia Film Commission (BCFC), for example, recently made the decision to focus on the electronic delivery of marketing material by redirecting its funds towards electronic activities instead of traditional advertisement. "We moved away from hardcopy collateral materials whenever possible but spent more on a limited number of high-end [ones] that could be adapted to different markets. We eliminated almost all print advertisement except for annual digest type ads in our target markets. At the end of the day, the change that was driven by difficult circumstances produced a superior result", (Susan Croome, Film Commissioner, BCFC).

A positive experience on any website increases the time spent at the site and therefore increases the dollar amount spent. Offering virtual tours is one way of providing interactivity, and some film commissions offer potential visitors the ability to take virtual tours of various film locations. The Wales Screen Commission has tried to anticipate its customers' needs upfront by providing an image photo database online covering all the region's locations. There are as many as 50 different angles of sites. It is also important for film commissions to consider, and accommodate, the language of their online visitors. The Hong Kong Film Services Office website offers a choice of two languages – English (default) and Chinese in addition to a text-only version.

Alongside the photo library, many websites include local support services available for film production, details of previous film and TV productions in the area, as well as any financial incentives. Testimonials and guarantees are also effective tools to build credibility online. Responsive PR strategies to deal with online criticisms can help an organization display openness and accountability and win over public perceptions (Melewar and Smith, 2003). The Tucson Film Office explicitly offers a guarantee to eliminate red tape in film production on its website. It does not explain what the office will do if this 'guarantee' is violated, however, but it is painting a picture of high quality service.

One significant online trend is the use of blogs to deliver promotional information. Rather than passively viewing a collection of static pages, today's Internet user is becoming an active participant. The growth of social networking - the creation and sharing of free content made by individual user - is

also changing the way people consume media (Brown, Broderick and Lee, 2007). The Hawaii Film Office has a dedicated link on its website to a blog called Hawaii Film Blog that allows users to keep abreast of the latest legislation and rules related to tax incentives. In the blog, there are also discussions about Hawaiian film festivals and TV productions, such as the series *Lost*.

Direct marketing and personal selling

Direct marketing and personal selling are crucial to film commissions' marketing strategies. Direct marketing encompasses direct mail, telemarketing, Internet and direct response television. Personal selling incorporates one-on-one campaigns such as trade show and film festival promotions, and locating and maintaining individual customers. The advantages of direct marketing cannot be underestimated as many commissions have a large proportion of repeat customers that are vital to their profitability. The Illinois Film Office for example has opted for direct mail campaigns rather than expensive trade show visits or journal ads. The 'Illinois Production Guide' is mailed to industry executives in book form and on CD-ROM. "We do more direct mail campaigns and more cooperative advertising with Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan", (Ron Ver-Kuilen, Director, Illinois Film Office). San Francisco ran an effective direct mail postcard campaign in 2006. The postcards were in the form of a one page film transcript that reflected the problems of trying to portray a location (in this case San Francisco) when filming in another. The tagline was: "The only way to get San Francisco is to shoot in San Francisco."

Although more expensive, some commissions favour personal selling over other communication tools, as the potential benefits may outweigh the extra costs. In this age of ubiquitous electronic communication, one element hasn't changed in the film industry: the industry is still driven by personal relationships. Understanding this, FilmOntario has co-financed a full time marketing office in Los Angeles, with the objective of promoting Toronto for potential feature films and television projects. "You can spend millions in advertising and direct marketing but we needed access, as in the one-to-one relationship model. Relationships are the bedrock of the film industry", (Sarah Ker-Hornell, Toronto Ontario Film Office). The Office is run by two, full-time marketing personnel. "We find that having a full time office in the LA market is extremely useful, providing us access to information, client intelligence and lead tracking that is not always possible to do well on a remote basis", (Donna Zuchlinski, Ontario Film Commissioner). Having a marketing office in the hub of Hollywood facilitates personal contact and introductions to key industry players. This enables precision-targeting, personalization, detailed knowledge of consumers, fast responses and flexibility.

An alternative choice is to use a scouting agency that specialize in finding suitable locations for producers, such as the William Morris Agency, and Plan-It Locations, both based in Los Angeles. Developing relationships with this particular segment may be advantageous, especially for a film commission with limited resources. "I spend a lot of my time looking for suitable locations for Hollywood producers. Visiting productions look for quality amenities and services – it should be easy to come to a location", (Phil Alberstat, William Morris Agency).

Commissions will sometimes send out salespeople to locate new customers. In 2002 the Wales Screen Commission sent a mission to India to attract 'Bollywood' productions to the region. In an eight-day visit, the commission's representatives met with senior producers in Mumbai and Chennai. "(The) visit is as much about perfecting the way we handle Bollywood productions as it is about attracting new ones", (Mike Wallwork, National Coordinator, Wales Screen Commission). Similarly, the Alberta Film Commission took part in a 2005 mission to Los Angeles to present details such as no sales tax, film development fund, friendly business climate and locations as a package to lure Hollywood to the

province. The mission succeeded in landing the commission three major projects with Disney, Warner Bros, and Turner Networks/Dreamworks.

Many film commissions exhibit at trade shows or film festivals, and this can be effective for those who are comfortable with one-to-one marketing in a highly charged environment. An example is the Virginia Festival of American Film held adjacent to Virginia's spectacular Blue Ridge Mountains. The festival attracts numerous filmmakers to screenings and panel discussions, simultaneously exposing them to the wonderful scenery of the area. Virginia Film Office staff use this opportunity to convey the cost effectiveness of filming in the state where comprehensive tax exemptions are in place. Larger annual film events are the Cannes Film Festival held in May, the American Film Market in February, and the Locations trade show in the spring. Locations is the only trade show dedicated to the specialized work of film commissions, and includes seminars, lectures, parties and meetings all designed to attract key industry professionals. Other important events include The Independent Feature Project in New York, the London Production Show, and the Film, Stage & ShowBiz Expo. The latter is a three-day trade show, another opportunity to mingle with Hollywood producers, directors, production designers and other location decision makers. Several Oregon Film and Video Office staff members attend this show and also cover it in their quarterly newsletter.

Discussion

It is only in recent years that destinations have realized the significant benefits (both short and long term) of film production. Likewise, there has been an increase in the amount of literature recognizing the significance of the film industry on local economies (Gasher, 1995; Weinstein and Clower, 2000; Coe, 2001; Turok, 2003). It is therefore not surprising that locations have become more strategic in their approach to selling their locations, the first step being to create a film commission responsible for promoting the region to producers. The Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) had 337 members at the beginning of 2009, and the organization has seen this number climb by 10-15 members every year for the last few decades. The results of this study showed that these commissions are pursuing one or more of three strategies; product differentiation, service differentiation and cost advantages. These results give partial support to the work of Christopherson (2006) who suggested that the primary explanation for runaway production today is the cost advantage. A large number of locations have positioned themselves as the low-cost alternative to Hollywood, and this is reflected in their promotional material. However, others are finding success differentiating on product or services they offer, and in the long-term, this may well be more sustainable. The dangers of differentiating on cost or price alone have been well-documented (Pelham and Wilson, 1996; Christensen, Johnson and Rigby, 2002; Zott and Amit, 2008).

The results also identified six main marketing tactics used by film commissions and these tactics are consistent with those used by destinations marketing organizations (Hudson, 2008). But like DMOs, many commissions referred to having extremely limited budgets, and as a result, they have to outsmart rather than outspend the competition. That means creating innovative, attention-grabbing advertising on a tight budget and maximizing the amount spent on media. In order to maximize marketing dollars, it may be necessary for commissions to focus their resources on certain target markets (Ali and Kaynak 1997). For example, there are a number of scouting agencies that specialize in finding suitable locations for producers, and developing relationships with this particular segment may be cost-effective. Developing relationships are clearly very important in this industry, with the results showing that direct marketing and personal selling are crucial to film commissions' marketing strategies.

Alternatively, commissions may choose to spend their advertising dollars on one specific media such as Internet advertising to maximize their exposure. Film commissions have found that online marketing is an effective way to control costs as opposed to traditional advertising methods, and are taking advantage of the interactive nature of the Internet to target international visitors through multiple language support on their websites and virtual tours of film locations. Furthermore, commissions are successfully using blogs to share promotional information and to stir excitement about the location by encouraging discussions about productions that are currently being filmed or have been filmed there previously.

Partnerships or joint promotions can also help maximize resources (Cai, 2002), and an increasing number of film commissions are working with the tourism industry in order to attract film production and then capitalize on the subsequent exposure. It was mentioned earlier that existing studies show that film commissions who collaborate with DMOs are likely to be more successful attracting film tourists (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006). Leveraging film tourism can bring significant benefits to film locations. Initially, it can help off-set costs during filming. The South African tourism department for example helps visiting film scouts find locations, and then provides technical support and accommodation for production staff. Destinations like Malta, Georgia and Iceland are offering extra credit to producers if the production is going to be good for tourism. The Malta Tourism Authority, for example, offers a cash incentive, as well as logistical support, to film and television productions that film 'Malta as Malta'. The Authority also hosts press trips to promote the island as a 'movie location', and this type of activity further establishes the destination as 'film-friendly' and is therefore beneficial to the local film commission. Other destinations that have become known as 'film-friendly' due to exposure through film are New Zealand and The Bahamas.

In retrospect, although this paper has highlighted some examples of best marketing practices amongst film commissions, the majority of marketing initiatives identified are somewhat traditional in nature. The diminishing effectiveness of traditional advertising techniques has been well documented (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004), so the authors suggest that to survive in an increasingly competitive marketplace, commissions will have to look towards more non-traditional forms of promotion. Film Ontario's decision to set up an office in the heart of Los Angeles is one such example. Leveraging the Internet is another, as is taking advantage of the growing phenomenon of film tourism. But the marketing of film locations is a relatively new phenomenon, and further research is required in order to identify the specific marketing activities that lead to success. This research should involve discussions with both film commissions and producers. Meanwhile, it is hoped that this paper will contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this area.

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Table 1 - Examples of Incentives Offered by Various Locations

Location	Incentives
New Jersey	20% tax incentive, 7% sales tax exemption, up to \$1.5 million loan guarantee
Connecticut	30% tax incentive
New Mexico	25% tax rebate, 0% loan up to \$15 million per project, no state sales tax, 50% reimbursement of wages for on-the-job-training of residents in advanced below-the-line crew positions
New York	35% tax credit of production expenditures, 5% additional tax credit from NY City
South Carolina	20% cash rebate on resident wages, 10% cash rebate up to \$3500 on out-of-state employee wages, 20% wage rebate on all employees, 30% supplier rebate from South Carolina suppliers, sales tax exemption for productions over \$250000
Montana	14% tax credit for hiring residents, 9% tax credit for goods and services purchased in Montana, no sales tax, 100% write-off of the costs of the film (or television) in production year, 7% accommodation tax exemption
Pennsylvania	25% tax credit, free use of state-owned property
Tucson	No sales tax, 20-30% rebate on all production-related costs
British Columbia	25% of qualified BC labour expenditures, regional 6% tax credit, 15% digital animation or visual effects tax credit
New Brunswick	40% tax credit of eligible salaries for residents,
Illinois	30% tax credit of Illinois production spending for the taxable year, 30% tax credit on resident salaries
Minnesota	15% to 20% rebate for Minnesota production expenditures, sales tax exemption, state lodging tax exemption
Wyoming	12-15% cash rebate for resident salaries and state suppliers
Hawaii	15-20% motion picture, digital media, and film production income tax credit
Oregon	20% cash rebate on state-based goods and services, no sales tax, 10% cash rebate for all employees, 6.2% of labour cash rebate for productions over \$1 million
Alberta	25-42% labour-based tax credit, no provincial sales tax
Northern Ireland	16-20% of production costs
New Zealand	Production grant up to 15% of expenditures
South Australia	6% payroll tax exemption
Toronto	25% tax credit on province-based labour, 16% tax credit for digital animation or digital visual effects

Table 2 - 2006 and 2007 AFCI Marketing Award Recipients

Film Commission	AFCI Marketing Award		
	Year	Place	Category
South Carolina Film Commission	2007	2 nd	Direct Marketing Piece
	2007	3 rd	Specialty Item – Clothing
Wichita Convention & Visitors Bureau, Greater	2007	1 st	Advertising – Black and White
Monterey County Film Commission	2006	1 st	B/W Ads Full Page (City/County/Region)
	2006	1 st	Color Ads Fractional (City/County/Region)
	2006	Honourable Mention	Specialty Items Other (City/County/Region)
El Paso Film Commission	2007	Honourable Mention	El Paso Film Commission
Montana Film Office	2007	1 st	Advertising – Color
	2006	1 st	Production Guide (Province/State/Region)
El Paso Film Commission	2007	Honourable Mention	Production Guide
Tampa Bay Film Commission	2006	3 rd	Color Ads Fractional (City/County/Region)
	2006	2 nd	Specialty Items Other (City/County/Region)
Placer - Lake Tahoe Film Office	2006	2 nd	Logo (City/County/Region)
Pennsylvania Film Office	2006	Honourable Mention	Specialty Items Other (Province/State/Region)
Tucson Film Office	2006	2 nd	Series/Campaign B/W or Color (City/County/Region)
San Francisco Film Commission	2007	1 st	Logo
Ontario Media Development Corporation	2006	3 rd	Location Brochure (Province/State/Region)
	2006	2 nd	Production Guide (Province/State/Region)
Northern British Columbia Film Commission	2006	1 st	Logo (City/County/Region)
	2006	3 rd	Location Brochure (City/County/Region)
New Brunswick Film	2007	3 rd	Advertising Series/Campaign
		Honourable Mention	Specialty Item – Other
British Columbia Film Commission	2007	1 st	Website
Wales Screen Commission	2006	2 nd	Color Ads Full Page (Country)
	2006	2 nd	Specialty Items Clothing (Country)
Film South New Zealand	2007	2 nd	Advertising – Black and White
		3 rd	Advertising – Color
		2 nd	Promotional Digital Presentation
	2006	3 rd	Color Ads Fractional (Province/State/Region)
		3 rd	Direct Mail (Province/State/Region)
		2 nd	Specialty Items Other (Province/State/Region)
Film New Zealand	2006	1 st	Logo (Country)

	2006	1 st	Production Guide (Country)
	2006	1 st	Website
Pacific Film and Television Commission	2006	2 nd	Color Ads Fractional (Province/State/Region)
	2006	2 nd	Direct Mail (Province/State/Region)
	2006	2 nd	Location Brochure (Province/State/Region)
South Australian Film Corporation	2006	1 st	Color Ads Full Page (Province/State/Region)
Royal Film Commission of Jordan	2006	1 st	Color Ads Full Page (Country)
	2006	2 nd	Logo (Country)
	2006	1 st	Location Brochure (Country)
Gyeonggi Film Commission	2007	1 st	Specialty Item – Clothing
Hong Kong Film Services Office, TELA	2007	2 nd	Production Guide

Figure 1 - Film Location Marketing