


**A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO LOVE: AN ANALYSIS OF TOURIST EXPERIENCE
AND AUDIOVISUAL-INDUCED TOURISM¹**

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João Lucas de Almeida Campos²

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG)

Belo Horizonte – MG – Brazil

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1548-0401>

Hannah Arvellos Diniz³

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG)

Belo Horizonte – MG – Brazil

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4155-9162>

Vivianne Limeira Azevedo Gomes⁴

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG)

Belo Horizonte – MG – Brazil

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0082-0482>

Júlia Drumond Cunha⁵

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG)

Belo Horizonte – MG – Brazil

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5821-3370>

ABSTRACT: This study proposes to analyze the film Travel Guide to Love from the perspective of the tourist experience identified in the work and through comments made by viewers on the internet. With a qualitative, bibliographic and descriptive approach, film content analysis was used as a research method. For the discussion, some moments

¹ Article approved in the Fast Track of Anptur 2024.

² Ph.D. student and Master's Degree completed by the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program in Leisure Studies (PPGIEL) of Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais [Federal University of Minas Gerais] (UFMG). Bachelor's Degree of Tourism from UFMG. Researcher of the research groups: LUCE – Playfulness, Culture and Education and the Laboratory on Professional Training and Performance in Leisure – Oricolé/UFMG.

³ Attending the Master's Degree program in the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program in Leisure Studies (PPGIEL) at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). Bachelor's Degree of Tourism from UFMG. Researcher at the LUCE Research Group - Playfulness, Culture and Education.

⁴ Attending the Ph.D. program in the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program in Leisure Studies (PPGIEL) at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). Master's Degree in Media Studies from the Graduate Program in Media Studies (PPGEM) at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte [Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte] (UFRN). Researcher at the Laboratory on Professional Training and Performance in Leisure – Oricolé/UFMG.

⁵ Ph.D. student and Master's Degree completed by the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program in Leisure Studies (PPGIEL) of Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais [Federal University of Minas Gerais] (UFMG). Bachelor's Degree in Communication (Social Communication) with a specialization in Journalism from UFMG. Researcher at the LUCE Research Group - Leisure, Culture and Education.

of the tourist experience portrayed in the film and their intersection with leisure and audiovisual-induced tourism stand out through the categorization of comments collected on the Letterboxd platform. The results demonstrate a connection on the part of users in relation to the scenes, the desire and motivation to visit Vietnam. It is concluded that audiovisual-induced tourism is intensified by the tourist experience, providing moments of leisure that are experienced authentically through Vietnamese cultural activities.

KEYWORDS: Audiovisual-induced tourism. Film-induced tourism. Tourist experience.

GUIA DE VIAGEM PARA O AMOR: UMA ANÁLISE SOBRE EXPERIÊNCIA TURÍSTICA E TURISMO INDUZIDO PELO AUDIOVISUAL

RESUMO: Propõe-se neste estudo analisar o filme *Guia de Viagem para o Amor* sob a ótica da experiência turística identificada na obra e por comentários feitos por espectadores na internet. De abordagem qualitativa, bibliográfica e descritiva utilizou-se como método de pesquisa a análise de conteúdo fílmico. Para a discussão, destaca-se alguns momentos da experiência turística retratadas no filme e a sua intersecção com o lazer e o turismo induzido pelo audiovisual por meio da categorização de comentários coletados na plataforma *Letterboxd*. Os resultados demonstram uma conexão por parte dos usuários em relação às cenas, o desejo e a motivação de conhecer o Vietnã. Conclui-se que o turismo induzido pelo audiovisual é intensificado pela experiência turística, proporciona momentos de lazer que são vivenciados de forma autêntica por meio de atividades da cultura vietnamita.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Turismo induzido por audiovisual. Turismo cinematográfico. Experiência turística.

Introduction

The audiovisual medium not only suggests destinations, but also provides travel experiences that have significant economic, ethical, political, historical, and social repercussions in the portrayed locations. With the proliferation of streaming platforms, the ways of accessing original films and other audiovisual formats created specifically for these platforms have become more accessible (Gun, 2020). The language barrier is no longer a significant obstacle, since dubbing and subtitle options have expanded globally, allowing the audience to enjoy a variety of content from different cultural backgrounds. This, in turn, drives tourism, as the audience is inspired and motivated to explore the destinations depicted on screen.

From fiction to reality, it is a fact that media and its audiovisual productions influence the subjects' choice in their travels (Beeton, 2016; Campos, 2022). Audiovisual-induced tourism articulates this conjunction in the visibility of the place where the story is portrayed, in the discourses represented through the narrative, and, in this way, can induce the viewer's motivation when choosing a destination (Campos; Gomes; Fonseca, 2020). It is noteworthy that, although this concept has already received several denominations, in this article the Portuguese term “turismo induzido pelo audiovisual” [audiovisual-induced tourism] is used, as it encompasses films, as well as soap operas, series, music videos, and reality shows (Gomes; Campos; Pereira, 2022).

To examine the phenomenon of audiovisual-induced tourism, the film *A Tourist's Guide to Love* will be analyzed. It narrates the story of Amanda Riley, an American who visits Vietnam to learn more about Saigon Silver Star, the Vietnamese receptive tourism agency.

Thus, in order to understand which elements are used to elucidate audiovisual-induced tourism linked to the tourist experience that occurs in the narrative, the following question arises: how do the characters express these tourist experiences, and how can this foster the debate about audiovisual-induced tourism and experience tourism?

Therefore, the general purpose of this paper is to analyze the film *A Tourist's Guide to Love* from the perspective of the tourist experience articulated with audiovisual-induced tourism. The specific purposes are categorized as follows:

- 1) To identify and discuss the points highlighted in the narrative that act as enhancers for audiovisual-induced tourism, whether gastronomy, leisure, landscapes, or tourist attractions.

- 2) To understand the feelings and emotions they awaken in the main characters and how this can enhance tourist experiences.
- 3) To reflect on the motivation of viewers to visit Vietnam through comments on the Letterboxd platform.

For this purpose, the article is divided into five parts: introduction, literature review regarding leisure and entertainment, audiovisual-induced tourism and experience tourism, methodological procedures, analysis of results and discussion. Finally, the concluding considerations. Finally, the final considerations.

Leisure and Entertainment for Audiovisual-Induced Tourism

Perceptions of leisure in both tourism and a film work involve not only evoking experiences and the ways in which individuals have fun through audiovisual media, but also being attentive to the transformations that have historically occurred in society's free time sphere (Adorno, 2002). This pursuit of entertainment, characteristic of modernity and of the transformation of free time into a commodity within the cultural "industry," encompasses diverse motivations and, in this context, refers to the search for scheduled and generally paid activities (Adorno, 2002). Such practices are shaped by market logic and define individuals' leisure time. Trigo (2003) illustrates this by highlighting the strategic and managerial role that entertainment plays in the production of reality, analyzing historical, social, and market-related aspects. This issue manifests itself through the media and information technologies, as they shape and influence the way people experience and perceive leisure in contemporary society.

Regarding leisure and entertainment, it is also important to highlight the attitudes they involve, in the sense that they range from amusement in response to actions and stories that entertain, calm, and delight (Han, 2019). The same author

emphasizes that entertainment is narration, given that narratives aim to please and excite through the representation of the social. It is precisely this narrative capacity that gives entertainment its high effectiveness, since, as observed by Han (2019):

“The narrative forms of entertainment in mass media contribute to the stabilization of society by internalizing moral norms, making them part of everyday life and the obviousness of ‘it is thus,’ which requires no further judgment or reflection” (p. 113).

The review made by Han (2019) also addresses the tangible value and lifestyle promoted by the entertainment industry, especially when portrayed and experienced through audiovisual media, along with its various products, productions, and cultural artifacts. These elements provide attributes, spaces, and locations for the pursuit of leisure. In this regard, Gomes (2023) highlights the growth associated with media-based forms of consumption, noting that entertainment is driven by this dynamic, with its growth being notable in the face of trends, mass culture, and the ephemeral consumption of pastimes (Gomes, 2023, p. 51). Thus, she emphasizes the profitability and market gains of products and services that shape people’s behavior, particularly the alienating forms that leisure assumes within capitalist logic and its means of production.

However, entertainment does not always refer to an alienating and passive approach of the subject. On the contrary, it encompasses a variety of cultural experiences enjoyed in everyday leisure, potentially generating fun and self-reflection within entertainment itself (Gomes, 2023).

This focus on entertainment corroborates the representations of reality through audiovisual works, which construct the collective imagination and create new leisure experiences. Furthermore, the viewer’s personal experience, between fiction and reality, transcends what is simply portrayed on screen. This experience is evoked by memory and influences the perception of reality through narrative plots and affective memory.

The experiences provided by leisure and entertainment play a crucial role in the composition of tourist attractions and in a destination's attractiveness. According to Coelho (2015), tourist attractions encompass a variety of resources designed to captivate tourists' attention. These resources can be tangible, including geographic location and physical aspects such as equipment and facilities; or intangible, related to history, culture, brand identity, local knowledge, and the hospitality of the destination's inhabitants. A destination's attractiveness, in turn, significantly influences travelers' choices, their satisfaction expectations, and their intention to revisit. This attractiveness is shaped by positive perceptions, influenced by opinion leaders, as well as by the benefits and motivations associated with the visit, including the overall experience, expenditure during the stay, and the quality of hospitality offered at the location (Coelho, 2015).

Therefore, cultural attractions and tourist appeal constitute essential elements for the development of tourism and leisure and entertainment practices. Thus, given the economic and social activity that these phenomena possess, destinations will be guided by these means, critically influencing tourists' evaluation and behavior (Coelho, 2015).

Audiovisual-Induced Tourism

Audiovisual productions portray different locations, landscapes, and cultures in their narratives, potentially promoting a tourist destination, as well as motivating viewers with the desire to visit these places (Campos; Gomes, 2024). The first study published on this phenomenon was conducted by Riley, Dwayne, and Doren (1998), *Movie Induced Tourism*, and investigates the potential that films have to direct the viewer's attention to tourist destinations. The authors listed some factors for the phenomenon, ranging from marketing with its campaigns and extensive publicity, to

signs that determine brands associated with viewers' emotions, such as the curiosity of subjects awakened through the culture shown, leading them to the desire to experience what was visualized in cinematography.

The authors Korossy, Paes, and Cordeiro (2021) conducted a study on art regarding tourism, cinema, and audiovisual media in Brazil, and identified that the first publication in the country was in 2011. The survey was carried out focusing on the main emphases in Brazilian production, which are: "I) audiovisual (and/or cinema) as a vector for image and promotion of tourist destinations; II) Image and representations of localities in audiovisual productions; and III) Cinematic tourism in Brazilian cities" (p. 118).

Thus, tourism influenced by audiovisual media manifests itself through travel or participation in leisure activities inspired by audiovisual works during a trip. According to Fonseca and Gomes (2020), there are three main types of stimuli provided by an audiovisual production, which may or may not be related to "(...) the location where the filming took place, the narrative presented and remarkable characters, or the presence of acclaimed artists" (Fonseca; Gomes, 2020, p. 660).

In turn, Sue Beeton (2016) states that audiovisual-induced tourism occurs when the tourist wants to visit a specific location, whether real or fictional, influenced by audiovisual works. The author also classifies cinematic tourism into two possibilities, the first being on-location, referring to visits to real places where audiovisual productions were filmed, such as natural landscapes, urban centers, streets, houses, castles, among others. An example is the film "The Beach", filmed in Thailand in 2000, which was shot on Maya Bay beach, on Koh Phi Phi Island. The location became internationally famous after the film's release, attracting millions of tourists who went to see the paradisiacal site: "Because of the film, there has been a rapid increase in

tourism to the islands” (Rattanaphinanchai; Rittichaiuwat, 2018, p.2). The second possibility defined by Beeton (2016) is off-location, a term related to places or events created specifically for audiovisual productions, such as film festivals, theme parks, and recording studios.

A notable off-location case is Hobbiton, in New Zealand, which served as the setting for *The Lord of the Rings* (1998) and *The Hobbit* (2012) trilogies. The works were directed by Peter Jackson, who chose a farm in northern New Zealand, judging it ideal to adapt Middle-earth, a fictional place from J. R. R. Tolkien’s literary work. The set was built for filming on the farm, and after production ended, it was preserved and opened to the public, receiving guided tours. It is noteworthy that visits are paid (Zhang; Ryan, 2022).

Audiovisual works can be a tool for promoting destinations in a subtle and spontaneous way. Unlike conventional advertising associated with sponsors and merchandising, this promotion indirectly motivates viewers to personally visit these locations. Tourist motivation is based on understanding the reasons and choices that lead a person to want to visit the destination depicted in film works. Rewtrakunphaiboon (2021) adds that a subject’s mental state, along with their particularities, values, and contexts, influences their desire to travel and experience a destination. This feeling is closely related to the subject’s decision regarding which destination to visit. In turn, Macionis (2004) observes that tourist motivation is related to determining factors that guide cinematic tourists to a specific place, which are internal factors (fantasy, ego, status, search for novelty) and external factors (location, characters, and plot of the work).

Regarding audiovisual productions considered as a motivating element in destination choice, the tourist develops expectations, especially through daydreams and

fantasies (Urry, 2001). Cinematic works construct an image of the destination through the various landscapes depicted in the narratives, feeding the collective imagination. This sensitization, as explained by Urry (2001), constitutes the images generated by different tourists' perspectives, which, through advertisements and media, form a self-perpetuating illusion system, providing a basis for tourists to select and evaluate potential places to visit.

In this analysis by Urry (2001), it is observed how media and images generated by audiovisual productions create mechanisms that sensitize people, whether regarding memory, symbols, concepts, and imaginaries, or in the search to experience new leisure activities and “collect” experiences (Macionis; Sparks, 2009). Moreover, Beeton (2016) emphasizes that cinematic tourism is an opportunity for fans of audiovisual productions to connect emotionally with the film on-site.

Tourist Experience and Authenticity

In the context of tourism, the experience of traveling represents a rupture with everyday interactions, which results in the discontinuity of social roles and causes a sense of detachment from what is familiar, as argued by Turner (1986). Gastal and Moesch (2007) discuss that traveling is related precisely to processes of estrangement in which the tourist, when moving, encounters the new and the unpredictable. A subjective mobilization then arises, leading the individual to reconsider not only the current situation, environment, and ongoing practices but also their previous experiences.

There is a clear distinction between living experiences and what can be called “an” experience. While the former implies passive acceptance of events, the latter transcends chronological time, becoming a transformative and formative agent, often initiated by moments of emotional intensity, whether of pain or pleasure, experienced

by an individual. After these moments, the person seeks to assign meaning to the experiences, transforming them into something deeper and longer-lasting (Turner, 1982).

According to Schmitt (1999), an experience is a singular and individual event, triggered in response to stimuli that involve the person integrally. Thus, it encompasses senses, emotions, thought, behavior, and interaction with the social or cultural environment. Experiences have a lifetime duration and are generally the result of direct observation and/or participation in real, imaginary, or virtual events. In tourism, it must be configured as an experience emerging from the traveler's personal richness, seeking moments and places that enrich their personal narrative.

Tourist experience, which focuses on developing tourism products that place the tourist as the protagonist of their own journey, will address understanding the desires of the contemporary tourist. Currently, these desires go beyond simple passive contemplation of tourist attractions (Pezzi; Santos, 2012). As outlined by Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung (2007), experience has been a fundamental element both in tourism practice and research in this field.

Tourists seek new perspectives and more sensitive and close attention, aligned with their desires and lifestyle. Thus, people explore new horizons through the process of deterritorialization, wishing to discover new worlds that match their tastes and preferences (Moesch, 2002).

In contrast to the mass tourism frequently occurring in the twentieth century, the new millennium demands new possibilities, as changes in tourists' tastes and preferences drive the search for new experiences. Experience-centered tourism is part of the human need for freedom and authenticity, a pursuit to feel alive and explore the new, providing not just a trip, but a journey of discoveries. Furthermore, there is an

appreciation of experience-based learning, recognizing that contact and interaction are essential elements to realize the idealized theoretical proposition.

Beyond the dimension of experience, another essential concept in tourism is authenticity. Although frequently debated, it also has ambiguities and limitations. According to Wang (1999), the concept of authenticity has questionable validity, as many tourists' motivations and experiences have not been fully explained. Thus, it becomes socially constructed and negotiable, varying according to the tourist's perspective (Cohen, 1988). It is worth highlighting that, according to Getz (2002), authenticity refers to what is genuine, unaltered, or true, and in the context of tourism, the term is often associated with a specific motivation, such as seeking authentic cultural experiences. Urry (2001) describes the tourist as a type of contemporary pilgrim, seeking authenticity in different times and places, away from their daily life. The tourist demonstrates fascination with the "real life" of individuals. However, the pursuit of authenticity may not be fulfilled, mainly due to the artificiality that composes tourist spaces.

MacCannell (1999) observes that the level of authenticity offered to individuals during travel is generally unsatisfactory. He highlights that tourist environments are frequently artificialized, while promotional arrangements of places make it difficult for tourists to clearly differentiate between authentic and vernacular areas (backstage) and staged and artificial areas (facades) of the social or natural environments they visit.

Thus, these perspectives will form the basis for understanding the content of the film *A Tourist's Guide to Love*, encompassing the issues contained in the narrative and integrated into the context of the cinematographic production, including the actions and dialogues of the characters on screen.

Methodology

This research has a qualitative approach of a descriptive nature, with the research object being the film *A Tourist's Guide to Love*. The analysis of the cinematographic production's content will be the methodological strategy outlined here. As highlighted by Plantinga and Smith (2009), the analysis of a film can be investigated using the film itself, independent of real assessments or responses influenced by cultural patterns or personal idiosyncrasies. Thus, in order to understand the elements used to elucidate the experience tourism that occurs in the film's narrative, we trace some perspectives on leisure and entertainment, experience tourism, and audiovisual-induced tourism.

After watching the film, elements of the narrative and scenes of interest were described based on content analysis according to Bardin (2016). This approach allowed a deeper understanding of the narrative and its main points regarding the relationships between leisure, tourist experience, induced tourism, and other concepts, including tourist attractions, appeal, and gastronomic tourism.

To complement the analysis of the promotion of Vietnam as a tourist destination, comments from viewers of the film on the Letterboxd platform were collected, a social network that allows discussions about films. This choice was made due to its global reach and the possibility of interaction among film enthusiasts from different countries, providing a variety of perspectives on the film. Comments were selected based on direct observation on the platform (Letterboxd, 2024a), focusing on those that directly addressed the tourist attractions presented in the film and expressed viewers' interest in traveling to Vietnam. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, they were grouped into different categories, allowing a more structured analysis of the public's perceptions regarding the destination portrayed in the film.

The aim was to capture viewers' opinions about the location and what could attract them to travel to Vietnam. The production was released on the Netflix platform and film production company on April 21, 2023 (Letterboxd, 2024b). Therefore, comments were selected from this date. Most comments occurred from April 21 to 25, 2023, totaling 44 pages out of 188 total pages (up to April 5, 2024). Within these 44 pages, 528 comments were collected. We opted for comments from these 44 pages because they contained initial impressions of the production and included comments regarding audiovisual-induced tourism. It is worth noting that the selection was limited to comments in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. Comments that did not address the destination or contained offensive language were excluded.

Comments were grouped into six categories of analysis: a) direct expressions of desire to travel (44 comments); b) attraction to culture, landscape, and tradition (31 comments); c) change of perspective about the country (6 comments); d) view of the country beyond the Vietnam War (5 comments); e) attraction to the relationships of local communities (4 comments); and f) attraction to gastronomy (2 comments). Through these categories, it was possible to observe what most caught the public's attention regarding Vietnam as portrayed in the film, enabling correlation between viewers' comments and the attractions presented in the cinematographic work.

These surveys highlight the potential of audiovisual-induced tourism as a facilitator of the tourist experience. Thus, the two methodologies are complementary and underscore the importance of audiovisual media as a form of motivation in tourism.

Results and Discussion

The film *A Tourist's Guide to Love* begins with Amanda Riley, an employee of the luxury travel agency Tourist World Travel, located in Los Angeles, USA. She

receives the company's assignment to go to Vietnam, visit a local receptive agency, and understand how they operate to host American tourists in the country. Upon arriving in Vietnam, Amanda is welcomed by the tour guide Sinh Thach, from the Saigon Silver Star agency.

Regarding the characters, the following stand out: 1) the protagonists Amanda Riley and Sinh Thach; 2) the group of American tourists, composed of Sam and his wife Don, together with their daughter Robin; 3) Alex, a young man traveling alone; 4) the retired elderly couple Brian and Maya Conways.

The audiovisual work shows the cities of Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh (Saigon), Da Nang, Hội An, Hanoi, and Hà Giang. The guide Sinh Thach presents the attractions of these locations throughout the narrative, locating them and explaining their culture and importance to the local population. This is an important narrative method, capable of developing the promotion of the locality.

Upon meeting the guide, Amanda questions him about the tourist spots available through the agency she works for. During the scene, she hands over a list with the tourist attractions she wants to visit, such as Notre Dame and Saigon Central Post Office, attractions already consolidated by mass tourism in Vietnam. However, Sinh highlights that these locations do not reflect the essence of Vietnam, revealing that the type of tourism he works with is different, and that not always the attractions included in conventional tour packages are the best: "A city is more than a list of attractions to be ticked off. Sometimes traveling is absorbing the local atmosphere" (character Sinh).

Simões (2009) emphasizes: "Tour packages offer scheduled, safe, protected trips, selected by specialized agencies to serve various types of clients, from the economic class to the luxury class" (p. 5). The author notes that packages may vary in terms of chosen transportation and accommodation according to the price paid for the

itinerary purchased, guiding the tourist throughout the process. Thus, tour packages are resources created for heterogeneous groups of people from different socioeconomic and cultural levels, but mostly with itineraries focused on the destination's iconic attractions, strengthening mass tourism.

It is perceived that the character Amanda intended to undertake a trip with a planned itinerary, not allowing space to experience unpredictable occasions and discover unexpected locations. Thus, from her arrival at the airport in Vietnam, having a stereotyped view of the destination, she ends up inferring ideas and perceptions that conflict with the character Sinh, a local resident. Ignarra (2003) highlights that “[...] sometimes differences in physical appearance and cultural behavior between foreign tourists and locals are so great that they create prejudice and antipathy” (p; 179).

Despite the character's resistance, the guide Sinh manages to show locations in Vietnam that were not on Amanda's itinerary, asking the protagonist to allow herself to experience the country in its true culture. Sinh explains that there is a difference between a traveler and a tourist: “The tourist wants to escape life, the traveler wants to experience it.” Amanda questions him: “What is wrong with wanting to escape it sometimes?” to which Sinh replies: “You don't know how much you are going to live. Why waste life escaping?”

The character Sinh also criticizes tourists who only want to visit attractions listed in guidebooks. The narrative emphasizes the importance of connecting with and learning about the local culture. Thus, the guide advocates that people should be travelers, learning the culture through its history and social spaces.

Regarding gastronomy, several scenes highlight food, with a focus on tourists tasting local dishes. During the visit to the regional market, the fruit Durian, popular in Asia and famous for its strong smell, is presented. One group member recommends

Amanda try the fruit, but she initially hesitates because of the odor. Nevertheless, after insistence, Amanda agrees to try the fruit and is surprised by the delicious taste, happy to have experienced it. Pezzi and Santos (2012) argue that contemporary tourists' desires go beyond mere passive contemplation of tourist attractions.

The scene of Amanda tasting durian generated reactions among internet users, who did not feel compelled to try the fruit but showed interest in Vietnamese gastronomy. User 17 states: "Vietnam looks good, and the food, except for Durian, seems delicious. I will book a ticket to Hanoi". This reaction suggests that Vietnam's culinary richness can captivate viewers.

Throughout the work, Amanda begins to embrace the experiences, which Pezzi and Santos (2012) argue represents a behavioral change in whether to engage in activities during a trip, experiencing something tied to local customs that differs from her home city's actions. An example is seen in two notable scenes. In the first, leaving the market, Amanda must cross the street to board the bus. Fearing the chaotic city traffic and without any pedestrian crossing signals, the protagonist only crosses guided by Sinh, who teaches her how to navigate the crossing (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Amanda's experience with the entropy of traffic in Vietnam



Source: Frame from the movie Travel Guide to Love (2024)

In the final scenes of the film, however, she manages to make the crossing alone, showing that she was able to learn from the country's culture and the travel experience. Thus, the cultural shocks observed in Amanda's experience involve contact with the new and unpredictable, but breaking down these barriers is essential for a more enjoyable experience at the destination. The experience involves courage and a feeling of satisfaction and contentment about the moments lived. Experiential tourism comprises a service aimed at stimulating the five senses and synergistically, “when all the senses are stimulated and the experience accesses an emotion that generates chills or tears” (Gastal; Moesch, 2007, p.11).

Tangible and intangible material goods are perceived through experiences in traffic, gastronomy and language throughout the work. These elements may be commonplace for locals, but they become attractive to tourists in Vietnam and contribute to the development of regional or local tourism. These attractions are related to the history, culture, knowledge and hospitality of the people who work in the place to be visited (Coelho, 2015).

From the Nang city, it is shown as one of the largest and most important in the country. In this destination, the best-known tourist attraction is Ponta Dourada, which was one of the places on Amanda's list, but to get to the attraction, the group would have to face traffic for approximately 3 hours. The guide Sinh suggests going to the My Son Sanctuary (figure 2), which is not on the conventional tourist itineraries, at which point Amanda shows her frustration at not seeing the Bridge, but agrees to go and see the Sanctuary.

Figure 2: Visit to My Son Sanctuary



Source: Frame from the movie *Travel Guide to Love* (2024)

In the excerpt from *My Son Sanctuary*, the protagonist highlights her emotions and sensations experienced during the moment by stating: “You can feel it. It feels like I’ve been transported to another time and place, you know? It’s not just another tourist spot, it’s an experience”. The focus on her gaze and her determination, and then immediately leaving the itinerary, expressing this to the guide, are predominant factors to believe that the protagonist was being marked by experiential tourism at that moment. Pedro *et al.* (2021) argues that one of the fundamental functions of the tourist experience focuses on the ability to stimulate a deep and immersive emotional activity in the tourist, creating an emotional connection between them and the place. Furthermore, the authors highlight that states of deep immersion, as Amanda narrates during this experience at the sanctuary, result in the tourist participating as an actor in the experience and not just as a spectator (Pedro *et al.*, 2021).

Thus, not only does Amanda experience a joyful moment on a tourist trip, but she also seems to be transported to a potential that transforms her as an individual, as she makes a decision that is unusual for her. This is reinforced in the narrative when she states, “I can’t believe I’m going to say this, but I want more of this”, meaning the emotional experience transformed her as an individual. This is argued by Pedro *et al.*

(2021) as a potential enhancer of the tourist experience, since factors such as the polarity and intensity of the emotional response, cognitive activity, connection to something grand and the transcendental nature of the moment exert great transformative potential on the individual.

This analysis can be reinforced when, at another point in the narrative, Amanda is on a cell phone call with her boss at the American Tourist agency and states that it was the best trip of her life, “because we had an authentic cultural experience”. And I can say that the whole group felt the same way. We changed, we were connected”. Pedro *et al.* (2021) discusses that when living remarkable experiences, positive memories promote positive states of nostalgia, satisfaction and create the desire to relive, revisit and remember the experience. This is reinforced when she argues that she wishes all Tourist customers felt the same way. The authors also argue that experience is decisive in the context of tourism, after all, it is what provides tourists with psychological benefits and the experience of states of physical well-being, these being the main factors capable of fostering the creation and maintenance of tourist preference for a destination (Pedro *et al.*, 2021).

The group then heads to the city of Hà Giang, where travelers can experience the local life of Vietnam's ethnic minorities, including customs, cuisine, crafts, and traditions. Furthermore, the processes for preparing for the Lunar New Year, presented by Grandmother Se Sinh to the group, the ritual consists of: cleaning antique pieces, painting bamboo, burning incense, preparing offerings with fruits, flowers, sweets and cooked food to celebrate and honor ancestors.

On the Letterboxd platform, direct contact with ethnic villages was discussed, especially with Sinh's grandmother. Many expressed appreciation for this aspect of the plot, highlighting the importance of the grandmother and her emotional role. Some

viewers even triggered fond memories with their own family experiences. User 13 commented on the scene, while User 33 added the following opinion:

The scenes with the grandmother and grandchildren warmed my heart. It made me miss my grandmother, remembering the moments I had with her. This film showed the wonders of such a beautiful place, with equally beautiful people, and that is priceless (User 13).

The film's strength lies in showing Vietnam in the most engaging and captivating way possible. Watching it felt like I was also part of the tourist group, laughing with them, trying delicious food and exploring the country. The emphasis given to the importance of grandparents was something that touched me deeply, making me miss my own grandparents a lot (User 33).

In the city of Hanoi, capital of Vietnam, the cultural attraction shown is the Thang Long Puppet Theater (figure 3). Artists move puppets in the water, which creates a fascination for the group of tourists during the shots. Sinh explains to the group that theater has a long history in Vietnam, dating back centuries, where locals would put on puppet shows to distract themselves when their rice fields flooded. Traditional water puppet performances date back to the 11th century, and the art depicts scenes from rural Vietnamese life, as well as local mythology, ancient stories and legends.

Figure 3: Show at the Thang Long Puppet Theater



Source: Frame from the movie *Travel Guide to Love* (2024)

In this and other passages of the feature film, we observe a vision of Vietnamese culture that often remains hidden from the West. Leisure practices composed of a variety of attractions and tourist spots, including guided visits in villages, dragon

dances, puppet theater, food preparation, beaches, and leisure activities in the water and on the sand, presuppose the central motivation of seeking new landscapes, rhythms, and customs different from those experienced daily (Camargo, 1998). Thus, cultural and traditional issues are brought to light throughout the narrative, as commented:

The film shows a side of Vietnam we did not know, and that is what makes it even more beautiful. The culture of these people was completely erased when it came to us in the West. A beautiful film, with a well-developed romance” (User 57).

User 57’s perception raises another point about productions depicting Vietnam on screen, considering that its historical films in the genre have often focused on war, epics, and historical dramas highlighting the Vietnam War (1959-1975) (Mesquita, 2004), rather than a romantic comedy with a storyline that allows viewers to glimpse the country’s landscapes. As noted by User 68:

It is good to see Vietnam and its culture presented with respect and honesty. The film has the courtesy to mention the American War in Vietnam only once. This is because, as the film points out, the war does not define everything that exists in the country” (User 68).

User 68’s statement echoes a passage from guide Sinh referring to this tragic landmark in Vietnam’s history, allowing us to perceive how the narrative was organized to promote places and arouse interest in the country. Urry (2001) states that the tourist’s gaze can be influenced through audiovisual media, motivating them to want to travel to the location shown on screen. This aspect can be corroborated by comments from users on the Letterboxd platform:

In pursuit of impartiality and appreciation of the positive aspects in films, the direction does an excellent job portraying the beauty of Vietnam. Instead of resorting to green screens or generic locations to simulate the journey, the use of real locations in the country enriches the experience. The culture, landscapes, and traditions presented are by far the most striking points of the film (User 70).

What a beautiful film! Booking my flight to Hanoi immediately, what an amazing place (User 10).

This was a remarkable production sponsored by Netflix. Makes me think of the trip I want to take with my mother to Vietnam (User 12).

Viewers' comments reinforce the power of audiovisual works in promoting tourist destinations. This aligns with the claims of Beeton (2016), Gomes, Campos, and Pereira (2022), and Rewtrakunphaiboon (2021), who argue that tourists are inspired by narratives, settings, and stories, which in turn makes them want to explore new destinations. Furthermore, Beeton (2016) highlights that tourism provides fans with an opportunity to connect emotionally with audiovisual works.

The film criticizes agencies offering fixed itineraries focused on popular destinations, often neglecting local residents' suggestions. Thus, the film highlights locations off the typical tourist circuit in Vietnam, encouraging a less massified approach, suggesting that tourists immerse themselves in the local culture. Scenes with guide Sinh expose Amanda to various locations that enrich her personal experience as a tourist, as observed by Trigo (2013, cited by Silva; Trentin, 2018).

Throughout the film, tourists go beyond passive contemplation of tourist attractions, immersing themselves in the local culture, especially when visiting the guide's Vietnamese community. This immersion provides a more authentic and close travel experience, as stated by Gastal and Moesch (2007).

Therefore, deviating from conventional tourism, tourists find a more authentic experience, exploring the "backstage" of Vietnam with the guide's help. MacCannell (1999) argues the importance of such experiences, discussing how travelers can find authenticity by escaping traditional tourist itineraries.

Moreover, comments on the Letterboxd platform corroborate the analyses conducted here, showing a search for locations beyond the traditional. Aspects such as cuisine, interaction with local communities, and culture are highlighted in the platform's comments, extending well beyond interest in landscapes alone.

Conclusion

This article aimed to understand how tourist experience and audiovisual-induced tourism are stimulated by the film *A Tourist's Guide to Love*. Thus, this paper sought to identify and discuss aspects of the narrative that act as promoters of audiovisual tourism, considering the emotions and feelings of the main characters associated with leisure tourism experiences, based on viewers' impressions on the Letterboxd platform.

The analysis of the film content revealed that the deep emotional connections of the characters with the locations they visit transform them as individuals. The protagonist, Amanda Riley, stands out, as throughout the trip she demonstrates that states of well-being, nostalgia, and satisfaction contribute to adopting new perspectives on her life. These scenes were characterized as tourist experiences and allowed understanding that such processes may lead to tourist loyalty.

Furthermore, the narrative presents various scenes that address the deconstruction of traditional tourist itineraries. While the protagonist expects a predefined itinerary, the receptive tour guide proposes a flexible and personalized approach, oriented toward Vietnamese culture. This highlights how an authentic itinerary can provide a full experience, allowing the tourist to engage more meaningfully with leisure and tourism. Moreover, when the tourist interacts with the local community, residents also benefit from the tourism activity.

The construction of the narrative revealed the tourist experience and audiovisual-induced tourism, evident in comments from Letterboxd users. These comments express desires to travel to Vietnam, attraction to culture, landscapes, traditions, gastronomy, and relations with local communities. An interesting aspect was the change in perception about Vietnam, going beyond the Vietnam War, contributing to symbolic and cultural repair of a country economically impacted by the conflict. The

film also depicts experiences and challenges faced by tourists and travelers seeking new adventures and leisure.

The leisure opportunities highlighted in the film reinforce the destination's appeal. These include aspirations for new experiences, such as visits to specific places, participation in events, theater, fairs, and gastronomic experiences. Such activities, planned and paid, are part of the itinerary offered by the Saigon Silver Star agency, encompassing diversions related to the production and consumption of leisure goods and services (Gomes, 2023, p. 49). On the other hand, individual enjoyment of chosen spaces is also observed.

The film also promotes reflection on leisure and entertainment, exploring the discourses represented by the characters and their influence on the debate about audiovisual-induced tourism. The presence of Vietnamese actors reinforces the promotional character of the work and fosters the syncretism between reality and fiction, conferring credibility and emotion to the narrative. This authentic representation values Vietnam's traditional cultures, highlighting those who produce and reproduce these cultural heritages.

For future studies, the impact of audiovisual works on promoting lesser-known tourist destinations can be explored, analyzing how narratives influence viewers' decisions to visit locations outside conventional itineraries. It would also be relevant to investigate tourists' behavioral transformation through authentic interactions with local cultures, examining perceptions of both travelers and host communities. Additionally, the role of film productions in reconstructing the image of destinations marked by conflicts, such as Vietnam, is a promising line, highlighting the transition from war narratives to cultural and tourism-focused approaches.

Another research avenue could be the influence of digital platforms, such as Letterboxd, on tourism promotion, evaluating how user comments shape perceptions and the popularity of film-depicted destinations. Intercultural comparisons of different audiences' reception of audiovisual productions promoting destinations would also be valuable, identifying cultural elements that generate greater interest and travel intention.

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Address of the Authors:

João Lucas de Almeida Campos
Electronic Mail: joaollucas@yahoo.com.br

Hannah Arvellos Diniz
Electronic Mail: hannaharvellos@gmail.com

Vivianne Limeira Azevedo Gomes
Electronic Mail: vivianne.limeira@gmail.com

Júlia Drumond Cunha
Electronic Mail: juliadrumondcunha@gmail.com