

Den massmediala (re)produktionen av turismens platser

Geografiska perspektiv på journalistikens
uttryck och produktionsförhållanden

av

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis project deals with the connections between the media and the tourism industries from a geographical perspective. It addresses the growing interdependence between tourism and media actors, specifically focusing on the mass media's production processes, which include choosing, cultivating and presenting images of tourist destinations, i.e. media images in the form of newspaper articles, travelogues, etc.

Two fundamental research issues are analyzed (in two separate studies): How are tourist destinations represented and under what conditions are these representations produced? In the first study the mass media representations applied to the tourist destination Mallorca in a selection of Swedish newspapers 1950-2000 are analyzed in terms of dedicated size, content and, evolution. The second study scrutinises the conditions, motivations, values, interaction and influence among travel journalists and their main sources.

The theoretical approach draws on literature in the fields of tourism and media, specifically focusing on journalism and human geography. The basic assumption about the media image is that it is a social construction of reality. Tourist destinations tend to be portrayed as spectacular, exotic and extraordinary, focusing the tourist paradise and the well-being of the tourists, neglecting the local society. Here travel journalism has a crucial position in the intersection between journalism and advertising. Furthermore, as the mass media has become more commercial and market-driven, the issue of influence has become even more complex.

The first study is a quantitative and qualitative content-analysis of 564 newspaper texts about Mallorca published in three daily Swedish newspapers 1950-2000. The text is analysed from a tourism-geographic perspective, focusing on how media images portray the tourism destination. The quantitative work involves analyzing the space allocated to the newspaper texts and comprehensively categorizing the places, people, events and conditions noted in relation to Mallorca. The qualitative work involves an in-depth analysis of the newspaper texts, in order to give a refined picture of the content and rhetoric used in the presentation of Mallorca. The second study is based on semi-structured expert interviews with Swedish travel journalists at a number of important Swedish newspapers and their main sources, i.e. representatives of the three biggest tour operators on the Swedish market and local actors representing one important foreign tourist destination (Mallorca).

The findings suggest that the news media images of Mallorca are homogenous, stereotyped and, relatively static, (re)producing a Swedish tourist paradise, however not solely from a positive angle. Possibly, a trend towards more investigating news media images of Mallorca is anticipated. The media production process consists of actors sharing the same main idea of travel journalism as a way to entertain and inform the media audience about tourist destinations. The professional backgrounds of the travel journalists and the lack of serious journalism dealing with tourism are two explanatory factors. Furthermore, close informal relationships between the travel journalists and their sources are important for the understanding of the situation.

Keywords: tourism geography, media geography, travel journalism, media (re)presentation, Mallorca

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