Exploring cinematic tourism through actor-network theory: Insights and innovations

Glayston André Melo da Silva

ABSTRACT
Cinematic tourism is an expanding phenomenon that examines the interaction between audiovisual products and tourist behavior, and their impact on destinations. This field investigates how films and TV shows shape perceptions of destinations and attract visitors, creating new tourism flows and economic opportunities. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) provides a nuanced approach to this study by considering the complex networks of human and non-human actors involved. Developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law, ANT highlights the significance of these networks in shaping social and economic phenomena. Applying ANT to cinematic tourism reveals how films, tourists, destinations, and local actors are interconnected. This theoretical perspective involves using various research methods, including interviews, discourse analysis, and field observations, to understand how audiovisual representations influence tourist attraction and how destinations respond. ANT helps identify gaps and opportunities in the tourism sector, such as the underutilization of the audiovisual sector by many destinations. Van der Duim, Ren, and Jóhannesson (2013) emphasize ANT's focus on multiplicity and ontological politics, arguing that tourism is composed of multiple realities and organizing attempts. They suggest that ANT provides a richer understanding of tourism dynamics by analyzing diverse interactions. Paget, Dimanche, and Mounet (2010) demonstrate how new associations between human and non-human actors, facilitated by a "leader translator," can drive a company's success within a tourist destination by reconfiguring resources into innovative products. Chen and Wu (2013) further illustrate this by using ANT and social affordance to analyze how postmodern attractions, like those themed around Jimmy, are constructed through relational networks. This approach offers a dynamic perspective on tourism attractions, revealing how various actors shape their development.

Keywords: Cinematic Tourism, Actor-Network Theory (ANT), Tourismscapes, Social Affordance, Ontological Politics.

INTRODUCTION

Cinematic tourism is an increasingly significant phenomenon that explores the interaction between audiovisual products and tourist behavior, as well as the impact these products have on destinations. This field examines how films and TV series shape perceptions of locations and attract visitors, often creating new tourism flows and economic opportunities for the featured sites.

To gain a deeper understanding of cinematic tourism, applying Actor-Network Theory (ANT) proves valuable. Developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law, ANT offers

a detailed and multifaceted approach by considering both human and non-human actors within a network of relationships. It focuses on how these networks, comprising individuals, groups, objects, and technologies, influence social and economic phenomena.

Figure 1: Example of ANT.
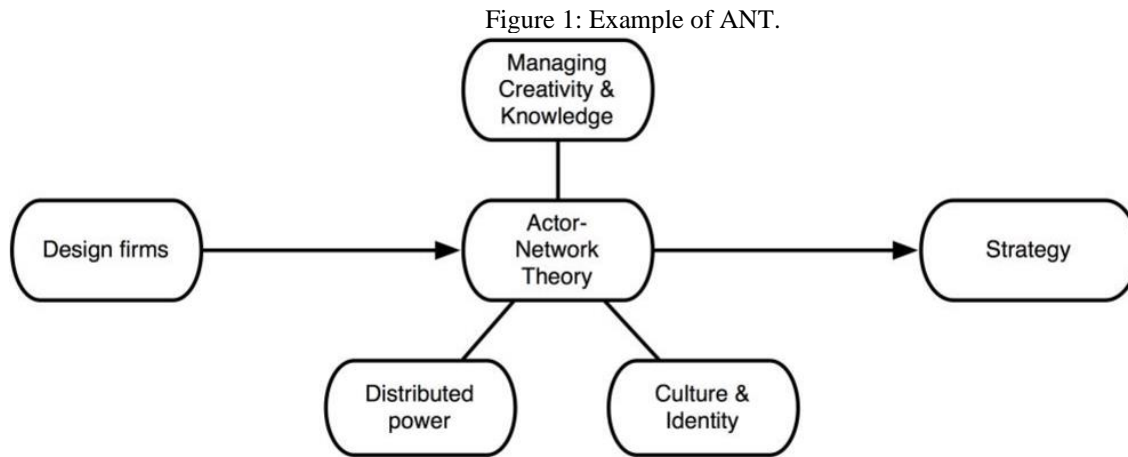
Source: van den Broek, Rieple (2017).

When applied to cinematic tourism, ANT shifts the focus to the intricate web connecting films, tourists, destinations, and local actors. This approach uses various research techniques, including interviews, discourse analysis, and field observations, to provide a comprehensive description of how audiovisual representations impact tourist attractions and how destinations adapt to this demand. Importantly, ANT helps identify gaps and opportunities for development, revealing the untapped potential in many tourist destinations where the tourism and audiovisual sectors remain disconnected.

Moreover, ANT's emphasis on multiplicity and the coexistence of different realities is crucial in understanding tourism. As highlighted by van der Duim, Ren, and Jóhannesson (2013), this perspective leads to the concept of "ontological politics," which shapes how research methods are approached and tourism phenomena are studied. ANT encourages recognizing tourism as a network of multiple realities, where each attempt to organize or categorize it results in diverse and coexisting versions.

The work of Paget, Dimanche, and Mounet (2010) further illustrates ANT's application by showing how a company's growth within a tourist destination can be attributed to the formation of new associations between human and non-human actors. The success of a company is linked to the role of a "leader translator" who effectively aligns the interests of various actors, enabling the reconfiguration of existing resources into innovative products that enhance market competitiveness.

In a similar vein, Duim (2007) introduces the concept of "tourismscapes" to describe how people, organizations, objects, technologies, and spaces become intertwined in the performance of tourism. This approach requires analyzing the processes of association and ordering among heterogeneous elements, offering a new perspective on the study of tourism.

Lastly, Chen and Wu (2013) adopt an innovative approach by examining a postmodern tourist attraction through the lens of ANT and social affordance. Their study reveals how a Jimmy-themed attraction is constructed as a network of diverse actors, showing how figures from Jimmy's illustrated books transform into social affordances through evolving mechanisms of ordering and valuing attractiveness. This conceptual application of ANT and social affordance offers an alternative and dynamic understanding of tourist attractions, highlighting the intricate interactions that shape these sites.

One of the main advantages of using Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in cinematic tourism is its holistic perspective. The theory allows for a detailed analysis of interactions between various human and non-human actors, helping to understand how films and TV series influence not only the perception of tourist destinations but also how these destinations respond to such influences. This holistic approach provides a rich view of tourism practices and the economic opportunities created by audiovisual representations.

Additionally, ANT facilitates the identification of the networks and connections involved in cinematic tourism. By focusing on interactions between different elements such as technology, media, and organizations, the theory reveals how these components are interconnected, offering a more dynamic and complex understanding of cinema-influenced tourism. Methodological flexibility is another significant advantage, allowing for the use of various research techniques, such as interviews, discourse analysis, and field observations. This variety of methods helps capture different aspects of the phenomenon and develop a more comprehensive understanding.

However, the use of ANT also presents some disadvantages. The complexity of the theory can be challenging, especially for those unfamiliar with its concepts and methods. Analyzing networks and interactions may require considerable effort and advanced technical expertise. Furthermore, ANT tends to focus more on networks and less on specific cultural and historical contexts, which may limit the understanding of important contextual factors. Emphasizing specific contexts can also make it difficult to generalize results to other destinations or tourism phenomena. Finally, measuring the direct impact of audiovisual representations can be complicated, as ANT focuses more on relationships and processes of translation rather than quantitative metrics.

In conclusion, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) offers a robust and innovative framework for understanding the complexities of cinematic tourism and broader tourism phenomena. By shifting the focus to the intricate networks that connect human and non-human actors, ANT reveals the multiplicity of realities and interactions that shape tourism experiences. This approach not only deepens our understanding of how audiovisual representations influence tourist behavior and destination development but also highlights the untapped potential within these networks for creating new opportunities and fostering innovation.

Through the application of ANT, researchers and practitioners can gain valuable insights into the processes of association, ordering, and translation that drive tourism dynamics. Whether examining the role of a "leader translator" in reconfiguring resources or exploring the construction of postmodern tourist attractions, ANT provides a versatile tool for analyzing the diverse and interconnected elements that define tourism. Ultimately, this theoretical perspective encourages a more nuanced and comprehensive exploration of tourism, offering new avenues for research and practical applications that can enhance the sustainability and growth of the industry.

REFERENCES

1. Chen, Y., & Wu, S. (2021). An exploration of actor-network theory and social affordance for the development of a tourist attraction: A case study of a Jimmy-related theme park, Taiwan. *Tourism Management, 82*, 104206. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104206

2. Duim, R. (2007). Tourismscapes: An actor-network perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*, 961-976. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ANNALS.2007.05.008

3. Duim, R., Ren, C., & Jóhannesson, G. (2013). Ordering, materiality, and multiplicity: Enacting Actor–Network Theory in tourism. *Tourist Studies, 13*, 20-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797613476397

4. Paget, E., Dimanche, F., & Mounet, J. (2010). A tourism innovation case: An actor-network approach. *Annals of Tourism Research, 37*, 828-847. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ANNALS.2010.02.004

5. Van Den Broek, A., & Rieple, A. (2017). Using actor-network theory to reveal strategy processes in design firms. *The Design Management Academy: Research Perspectives on Creative Intersections, 4*, 1373-1390.

6. Pessoa, E. G. (2024). Conventional treatment in the removal of microcontaminants. *Seven Editora*. Disponível em: https://sevenpublicacoes.com.br/editora/article/view/5037. Acesso em: 16 ago. 2024.