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Audiovisual Narratives and the Social Production of Travel Desire: A Comparative Study of Spain and Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The relationship between audiovisual content and tourism has taken on growing importance in shaping destinations and attracting travelers. Movies, TV series, and documentaries act as symbolic devices that construct tourist imaginaries, influence travel motivations, and reshape perceptions of regions. Although the literature has demonstrated the power of fiction to inspire travel, gaps remain regarding the role of documentaries, sociocultural differences between countries, and the influence of demographic variables on media reception. This study compares Spain and Colombia from a communicative and sociocultural perspective, distinguishing between audiovisual inspiration and effective tourism activation. **Methodology**: A quantitative, descriptive, and comparative design was applied using data from the 2025 EAE Tourism Study, based on online surveys conducted in Spain and Colombia among adults who had taken at least one leisure trip in the past 12 months (N=1,001). Percentage distributions were analyzed to estimate prevalence, inspirational genres, and differences by age and gender. This approach is innovative in that it comparatively

operationalizes the conversion between inspiration and activation and highlights the specific role of the documentary as a driver of tourism in a Latin American context. **Results**: Contrasting patterns were observed between the countries. Results: Contrasting patterns were observed across countries. Spain exhibits a balanced profile among documentaries, series, and feature films as sources of inspiration, while Colombia shows a predominance of documentaries. The motivation to travel is more closely associated with fiction in Spain and with documentaries in Colombia, with variations by age cohort and gender. The comparison between the two countries and the distinction between inspiration and activation allow us to identify two cultural models for converting mediated desire into mobility: a more balanced, fiction-based model in Spain and a factual-documentary model in Colombia. **Discussion**: The findings indicate that the influence of audiovisual media depends on the cultural context of reception, the type of narrative, and sociodemographic profiles. The distinction between inspiration and activation allows for the identification of mechanisms by which mediated desire is converted into tourism mobility, linking to concepts of narrative transport, the construction of imaginaries, and perceived authenticity. **Conclusions**: Audiovisual tourism is a heterogeneous and culturally conditioned phenomenon. The results have implications for film commissions and destination communication strategies, underscoring the need to adapt audiovisual-tourism policies to the profiles and motivations of audiences in each country.

Keywords: audiovisual tourism; film-induced tourism; documentary; narrative transportation; tourist concepts; travel motivation; tourism sociology.

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of fiction on shaping destinations has been extensively documented in the specialized literature on film-induced tourism. Studies reveal that audiovisual products can modify the perception of a place, generate emotional associations, build expectations, and mobilize audiences toward specific locations. These dynamics have been observed in a wide variety of contexts, from European cities transformed after the filming of global fiction to rural regions that have revalued their cultural identity through television narratives. According to Sánchez-Castillo et al. (2024), one of the central elements of this phenomenon lies in the capacity of audiovisual texts to construct symbolic representations that, although fictional, acquire substance within the tourist experience and reconfigure the relationship between territory, memory, and cultural consumption.

In this context, storytelling occupies a strategic position within contemporary theories of destination communication and marketing. As Zhang and Ramayah (2024) point out, well-structured narratives—those that generate coherence, emotion, and authenticity—play a decisive role in how audiences connect with the places depicted. The literature suggests that the symbolic resonance of a story can help viewers not only recognize a place but also incorporate it into their personal worldview. This narrative process is integrated with the construction of a territorial brand, building bridges between cultural identity, the tourist experience, and audiovisual media.

The experiential dimension has also been the focus of attention. St-James et al. (2018) show that narrative immersion extends the journey beyond physical displacement, shaping symbolic and affective experiences that anticipate, accompany, or reconfigure the tourist experience. The interaction between audiovisual consumption and travel is thus inscribed within a communicative framework that articulates emotions, expectations, and cultural performativity. Fiction, therefore, not only inspires travel but also shapes how it is experienced, influencing visitors' practices and their ways of interpreting the environment.

Despite growing academic interest, significant gaps remain in the field. Much of the literature has focused on iconic case studies—such as *Game of Thrones*, *Narcos*, or *Money Heist*—which, while allowing for the

exploration of highly visible media phenomena, do not sufficiently address comparative dynamics between countries with distinct audiovisual traditions, consumption patterns, and sociocultural frameworks (Osácar Marzal et al., 2022; Sánchez-Castillo et al., 2024). Most research is located in Europe, North America, or Asia-Pacific, while Latin American regions remain underrepresented despite the growing importance of their audiovisual industries.

Furthermore, there is a gap in research regarding the role of documentaries as a driver of tourism. Although studies such as Nakayama's (2021) show that fiction plays a significant role in travel motivation, documentaries emerge as a particularly influential genre for audiences interested in authentic experiences, local culture, or environmental issues. However, their specific impact on tourism decisions has received less empirical attention, especially in countries where documentaries have a strong cultural and educational tradition, such as Colombia.

Another limitation of the field lies in the limited integration of sociodemographic variables into analytical models. Although some studies have examined differences by age or gender, few have explored how these dimensions interact with the reception of different audiovisual genres or with tourism motivations derived from media consumption. The literature also points to the need for more comprehensive frameworks that articulate cultural identity, destination perception, and tourist behavior, while also integrating comparative perspectives and robust empirical approaches (Nieto-Ferrando et al., 2021).

At this point, it is pertinent to broaden our perspective to include prior sociocultural processes that allow us to understand how audiovisual media shape tourist imaginaries. The history of surfing is a paradigmatic example. As Santos González (2016, 2022) has studied, certain media products played a decisive role in the global expansion of surfing as a cultural practice and tourist attraction. The series and subsequent film *Gidget* were considered catalysts for the surf boom in California, articulating a youthful imaginary based on the beach, freedom, and the coastal lifestyle that quickly transcended into popular culture. Later, *The Endless Summer* consolidated this narrative by projecting an idealized and almost mythical vision of surfing, combining images, narrative, and emotion to transform a cultural niche into an international phenomenon. Both cases demonstrate that audiovisual media not only represents social practices but also actively contributes to their production, shaping perceptions, motivations, and behaviors. From this perspective, the parallels with film tourism are evident: fiction does not merely show places, but symbolically reconfigures them and projects them as desirable destinations.

Subsequent research by the same author addresses the relationship between infrastructure, culture, and tourism (Santos, 2022), as well as the role of film in promoting surf-related destinations (Santos, 2016). This work reinforces the idea that audiovisual mediation acts as a catalyst for processes of territorial revaluation and the formation of tourist imaginaries. Thus, the contributions on surfing allow for the contextualization audiovisual tourism within broader communicative phenomena in which narrative, identity, and displacement interact in complex ways.

In parallel, the institutional sphere has also undergone changes linked to the role of film commissions and film offices in destination promotion. As Araújo Vila and Fraiz Brea (2025) demonstrate, these entities play a fundamental role in attracting film productions, shaping audiovisual development policies, and boosting the economic activity of the regions. Their presence contributes to strengthening the interaction between the film industry and tourism, fostering synergies that inform territorial branding strategies and visitor attraction programs. Their relevance confirms that audiovisual tourism constitutes a field of study where cultural, economic, and communicative interests converge.

Based on this conceptual framework and the current state of research, the need for comparative studies that systematically analyze how different audiovisual genres influence tourism motivation in diverse cultural contexts is evident. The comparison between Spain and Colombia is of particular interest for several reasons. First, both countries have dynamic audiovisual industries, but with different historical structures and production models. Second, their audiences exhibit distinct consumption patterns, which can lead to different ways of connecting emotionally with audiovisual narratives. Third, there is a notable contrast in the importance of documentaries: while their relative weight remains stable in Spain, in Colombia they constitute a particularly influential genre, especially among the elderly, prompting an exploration of the socio-educational and cultural reasons behind this behavior.

To address these gaps, this study adopts a comparative approach between Spain and Colombia and analytically distinguishes between audiovisual inspiration and effective tourism activation. This distinction allows us to examine not only which content is associated with the desire to travel, but also which content is linked to converting that desire into actual travel.

From the field of Social Communication, this work focuses on the study of symbolic mediations through which audiovisual narratives produce imaginaries about places, shape expectations, and contribute to the social construction of the desire to travel. In this sense, audiovisual-induced tourism can be understood as a phenomenon of cultural reception where narrative transport, identification, and regimes of credibility (fiction/non-fiction) modulate the transition between representation, intention, and practice.

Based on the gaps described, the research is guided by the following questions: (1) What is the prevalence of tourism induced by audiovisual content in Spain and Colombia among recent travelers? (2) Which genres (films, series, documentaries) are most frequently associated with travel inspiration in each country? (3) Which genres are associated with travel activation (actually taking a trip), and how does the inspiration-action conversion differ between Spain and Colombia? (4) What age- and gender-specific patterns of inspiration and activation are observed?

Thus, the study provides: (a) comparative evidence between two Spanish-speaking contexts with differentiated consumption patterns; (b) an analytical distinction between audiovisual inspiration and tourism activation; and (c) specific attention to the role of documentary and sociodemographic segmentation, with implications for destination communication strategies and Film Commission policies.

The following specific objectives are set for its development:

1. To identify the prevalence of tourism induced by audiovisual content in Spain and Colombia.
2. To examine what types of content (films, series and documentaries) most strongly inspire travel intentions in each country.
3. To analyze the sociodemographic differences associated with audiovisual tourism, with special attention to age and gender.
4. To describe the patterns of tourism activation derived from audiovisual consumption and their relationship with travel trends.
5. To interpret the results in light of the main conceptual frameworks on audiovisual communication, tourist motivation and symbolic construction of the destination.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Studio Design

This research adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and comparative design, based on the analysis of data from the EAE's 2025 Tourism Report: Emerging Travel Modalities (Santos González & Mellit, 2025), conducted in Spain and Colombia. This approach allows for a precise examination of the relationship between audiovisual consumption and tourism behavior using homogeneous and comparable indicators across countries.

The choice of a descriptive design responds to the objective of identifying patterns of behavior, prevalences and sociodemographic differences related to tourism induced by audiovisual fiction, following the methodological recommendations of previous studies in this field (Gómez-Morales et al., 2022; Nakayama, 2021).

2.2. Population and Sample

The study population consisted of individuals over 18 years of age residing in Spain and Colombia who had taken at least one leisure trip during the previous twelve months. The original research was administered via the YouGov online panel, employing national representativeness criteria based on quotas for gender, age, and region.

The initial sample consisted of 654 cases in Spain and 855 in Colombia (N = 1,509). For the specific analysis of film tourism, only individuals who met the leisure travel criterion during the past year were selected, resulting in an analytical base of 500 cases in Spain and 501 in Colombia (N = 1,001). This segmentation allows the study to focus on people with recent travel experience, a necessary condition for evaluating the real influence of audiovisual content on tourist travel.

2.3. Collection Instrument and Technique

The data was obtained through a structured online survey administered by YouGov between June 5 and 12, 2025. The questionnaire, consisting of 14 questions and with an average duration of five minutes, addressed general travel habits, home exchange, film tourism, and interaction with artificial intelligence tools.

The instrument was designed by the research team responsible for the EAE's 2025 Tourism Report, that defined the items and their conceptual structure following models established in the analysis of tourism induced by audiovisual fiction. Subsequently, YouGov was responsible for the technical implementation, the delivery of the questionnaire, and the quality control of the fieldwork, ensuring independence in data collection.

The section dedicated to film tourism included questions about travel experiences motivated by films or series, the types of audiovisual content that inspire travel, and various sociodemographic variables. The questionnaire structure—based on closed-ended questions with single or multiple selection options—conforms to standard procedures for measuring motivations, preferences, and behaviors related to media consumption (Araújo Vila et al., 2021; St-James et al., 2018).

2.4. Procedure and Quality Control

Data collection was conducted using quota-controlled panel sampling. YouGov applied automated validation mechanisms to ensure the consistency of responses, including the detection of anomalous completion times, demographic verification of panelists, and IP and device controls. Proportional distributions by region and sociodemographic segment were also ensured in both countries.

The significant differences indicated in the original tables were calculated by YouGov using proportion comparison tests with a 95% confidence level. This information, incorporated into the results analysis, allows for a proper interpretation of the differences between groups and countries.

2.5. Variables Analyzed

The variables included in the study were organized into three groups. The dependent variables focused on travel motivated by audiovisual content and the tourism activation resulting from the consumption of such content. The independent variables corresponded to the type of audiovisual content that inspires travel—documentaries, films, series, sagas or franchises, music videos, or others. Finally, sociodemographic variables related to age, gender, and country of residence were incorporated in order to identify different patterns in the interaction between audiovisual consumption and tourism behavior.

2.6. Analysis Technique

Given that the available data are aggregated, a comparative descriptive analysis based on percentage distributions was developed. This procedure allowed for examining the prevalence of tourism induced by audiovisual content, comparing the audiovisual genres that generate tourist inspiration or activation, and analyzing the differences between Spain and Colombia. Variations according to gender and age were also studied, considering the relevance of these factors in the specialized literature on audiovisual consumption and tourist motivations (Sánchez-Castillo et al., 2024).

The use of aggregated data does not limit the ability of the analysis to identify general trends and interpretive patterns, central objectives in descriptive-comparative research.

2.7. Rigor, Validity and Limitations

The methodological accuracy of the study is based on the use of data from a source with a standardized methodology widely used in social research, the application of demographic quotas that ensure representativeness, the consistency of the questionnaire in both countries, and quality control conducted by an independent agent. Transparency in the description of the survey instrument, the target population, and the selection criteria reinforces the study's validity.

2.8. Epistemological Approach to the Discussion

The discussion of results is based on a sociocultural interpretive approach, which understands audiovisual narratives as devices of symbolic mediation in the construction of tourist imaginaries and desires for mobility. This perspective is relevant for analyzing differences in reception between national contexts and between generational and gender profiles.

In keeping with the descriptive-comparative design, the analysis does not seek to establish causal relationships, but rather to identify patterns of inspiration and activation and to propose plausible theoretical interpretations articulated with communication concepts, for example, narrative transport, perceived authenticity and cultural mediation.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Prevalence of Film Tourism in Spain and Colombia

The data obtained allows for an initial comparative assessment of the presence of film tourism in both countries. In Spain, 28% of participants reported having taken a trip motivated by a film or series, confirming

that this phenomenon affects almost a third of the traveling population. In Colombia, this proportion rises to 35%, placing the country at a significantly higher level of incidence. This difference suggests a greater receptiveness of the Colombian market to the influence of audiovisual media on tourism, as well as a potentially greater sensitivity to content that incorporates images of destinations.

Beyond the direct impact, substantial differences are also observed in the types of content that inspire travel. In Spain, the proportion of people who mention documentaries (38%), series (37%), and films (36%) is practically equal. This homogeneous distribution suggests that Spanish audiences are similarly inspired by different narrative formats, maintaining a balance between fiction and non-fiction. In contrast, in Colombia, inspiration is clearly concentrated on documentary content, which reaches 52% and far surpasses fictional formats such as films (33%) or series (28%). This predominance indicates the relevance of factual audiovisual content as a stimulus for imagining travel in the Colombian context.

Additionally, the minority categories also show differences between countries. While in Spain sagas or franchises (5%) and music videos (4%) have a relatively low presence, in Colombia these categories reach higher proportions (9% and 13%, respectively), which broadens the range of content capable of inspiring tourism.

Overall, the results show that, although both countries have significant levels of film tourism, the inspiration profile differs significantly, with fiction having a greater weight in Spain and documentary content in Colombia.

Table 1. *Film Tourism in Spain and Colombia: General Comparative Indicators*

Indicator	Spain (%)	Colombia (%)
Having traveled for a movie or series	28	35
Documentaries that inspire traveling	38	52
TV series that inspire traveling	37	28
Movies that inspire traveling	36	33
Sagas / franchises	5	9
Music videos	4	13
Others	7	9
None of these	20	10

Source: Elaborated by the authors.
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

3.2. Sociodemographic Patterns of Film Tourism in Spain

A detailed examination of the data by gender and age in Spain reveals a defined internal structure for film tourism. In terms of gender, women show a higher incidence of trips motivated by audiovisual content (31%) compared to men (26%). This difference, consistent with reception patterns identified in other studies, is accompanied by a greater female sensitivity to serial and cinematic narratives as sources of tourist inspiration.

The analysis by age group reveals a strongly generational pattern. The 25–34 age group stands out as the most influenced by audiovisual media (57%), positioning it as the core of film tourism in Spain. This group combines high consumption of streaming platforms with a travel style that integrates emotions, narratives, and experiences. Young people aged 18–24 constitute the second most likely group to engage in this type of travel (34%), confirming the connection of younger generations with travel motivated by fiction. From age 35 onward, the incidence gradually decreases, reaching 17% among those over 55, indicating a gradual loss of

audiovisual media's motivating power in older age groups, although with relevant particularities detailed later.

Regarding the content that inspires travel, the sociodemographic analysis reveals a complex interplay between gender, age, and content type. Women show a greater inclination towards series (44%) and film (38%), demonstrating a preference for fictional formats with a strong emotional or narrative component. Men, on the other hand, show more balanced values between both formats, although with a slight tendency towards film (33%).

From a generational perspective, the 18–24 and 25–34 age groups stand out for their strong inspiration from television series and films, indicating that fiction is a central resource in shaping the tourism imagination among younger audiences. In contrast, older age groups are primarily inspired by documentaries, reaching 52% among those over 55, suggesting a preference for content that combines information, landscapes, and narratives based on real events.

Overall, the data from Spain reveals a pattern of film tourism linked to young audiences and fictional narratives, while older segments show a clear inclination towards documentary inspiration, which differentiates their motivations and expectations.

Table 2. *Spain: Film Tourism Based on Gender and Age*

Variable / Category	Man	Women	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
Having traveled for a movie or series	26	31	34	57	32	25	17
Documentaries	37	39	26	21	28	37	52
Series	30	44	48	58	42	35	24
Cinema	33	38	48	49	36	33	29
Sagas / franchises	7	4	6	14	7	7	1
Music videos	7	2	3	7	9	13	5
Others	7	7	12	11	5	6	7
None of these	23	16	14	11	21	23	21

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

3.3. Sociodemographic Patterns of Film Tourism in Colombia

The structure of film tourism in Colombia presents both commonalities and divergences compared to the Spanish case. Regarding gender, men show a higher incidence of trips motivated by audiovisual content (39%) compared to women (31%). Although the difference is not extreme, it does reflect a different dynamic than that observed in Spain, where the greatest activity is concentrated among female audiences.

The generational analysis confirms an equally important pattern. The 18–24 age group (39%) and the 25–34 age group (40%) lead in tourism activity linked to audiovisual content, which coincides with the greater use of digital platforms and high exposure to audiovisual content in these cohorts. However, those over 45 maintain significant levels of participation, especially when considering documentary content, which reaches very high proportions among those over 55 (59%) and in the 45–54 age group (64%).

Regarding the type of content that inspires travel, Colombia presents a much more defined profile than Spain. Documentaries are the main source of inspiration across all age and gender groups, suggesting a strong connection between the perception of authenticity, territorial exploration, and travel decisions. While in Spain series particularly inspire younger people, in Colombia their influence is more moderate and

concentrated in the 35–44 age group (36%). Film shows stable levels of inspiration at around 30–35% in most groups.

These findings point to an ecosystem in which factual content, and particularly documentaries, play a fundamental role in the construction of the Colombian tourist imaginary, with a greater capacity to influence travel decisions than in the Spanish case.

Table 3. *Colombia: Film Tourism Based on Gender and Age*

Variable / Category	Man	Women	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
Having traveled for a movie or series	39	31	39	40	38	36	24
Documentaries	54	50	38	43	55	64	59
Series	33	32	39	35	34	31	27
Cinema	23	32	33	26	36	29	20
Sagas / franchises	11	14	15	12	13	12	12
Music videos	9	5	6	10	7	9	4
Others	9	9	4	12	9	3	11
None of these	13	8	16	10	7	7	11

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

3.4. Inspiration Versus Tourist Behavior: Differences Between Those Who Have Traveled and Those Who Have Not

The final analysis distinguishes between audiovisual inspiration and actual tourist behavior. Among those who have traveled motivated by audiovisual content, Spain shows a pattern strongly oriented towards fiction: 66% of these travelers identify series as their main motivating factor, while film reaches 64%. Documentaries, although present, have a significantly lower impact (29%). This suggests that tourist activity among Spaniards responds more to emotional narratives, characters, and fictional stories.

In Colombia, the situation is different. Although film (44%) plays a very important role in driving travel, documentaries reach 52% among those who have traveled, making them the content with the greatest capacity to transform inspiration into travel action. Series, on the other hand, show a more moderate level of influence (43%).

Among those who haven't taken this type of trip, documentaries emerge as the main source of inspiration in both Spain (41%) and Colombia (51%). This difference between content that inspires and content that ultimately motivates travel is particularly noticeable in Spain, where fiction serves as the main catalyst for action, while documentaries function as a source of inspiration that has not yet led to action.

In Colombia, on the other hand, the continuity between documentary inspiration and tourist action is clearer, indicating that factual content plays a decisive role in activating travel.

Table 4. *Inspiration According to Content Type and Behavior*

Content Type	Spain – Visit	Spain – No Visit	Colombia – Visit	Colombia – No Visit
Series	66	25	43	20
Cinema	64	24	44	26
Documentaries	29	41	52	51
Sagas / franchises	11	3	11	5
Music videos	5	4	14	12
Others	1	10	4	11
None of these	–	27	–	15

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4. DISCUSSION

The results obtained allow for a deeper understanding of film tourism from a comparative perspective, providing relevant evidence regarding the influence of audiovisual content on tourist inspiration and mobilization. In this sense, the findings align with a well-established body of literature demonstrating that audiovisual fiction shapes destination perceptions, modifies tourist imaginaries, and triggers travel behaviors (Nieto-Ferrando et al., 2021; Zhang & Ramayah, 2024). However, this study confirms that these effects are not uniform across all cultural contexts, but rather depend on the interaction between sociodemographic variables, content types, and media reception patterns.

From a communication perspective, these results can be interpreted as variations in the mechanisms of narrative transport and cultural mediation of desire: certain narratives facilitate the viewer's symbolic 'inhabiting' of the destination and incorporating it into their imagination, while others operate as anchors of credibility that bridge representation and practice. The distinction between inspiration and activation makes it possible to operationalize this transition between iconography and mobility.

4.1. Differences Between Spain and Colombia: Two Models of Audiovisual Inspiration

The data show that Spain and Colombia have two distinct profiles of audiovisual tourism inspiration. In the Spanish case, documentaries, series, and films have virtually equivalent levels of influence, suggesting that the audience combines fiction and factual content as stimuli for imagining and planning trips. This balance aligns with the "multiformat engagement" model described by Gómez-Morales, Nieto-Ferrando, and Sánchez-Castillo (2022), according to which viewers integrate different genres—fictional and non-fictional—in their construction of meaning about the places depicted.

In Colombia, however, documentaries are notably predominant, inspiring 52% of the population. This difference can be interpreted in light of research such as Nakayama's (2021) findings, which indicate that in various Asian countries— a context with certain similarities in the consumption of informational and experiential content—documentaries and exploration formats have a high capacity to attract viewers' attention and stimulate tourist interest. The Colombian case seems to fit this logic: factual narratives possess greater credibility, perceived authenticity, and the ability to generate a desire for exploration, especially among adult audiences.

The predominance of documentary filmmaking in Colombia can be interpreted as an effect of specific sociocultural factors: (i) the appreciation of experiential and non-fiction audiovisual works as a record of reality and social memory; (ii) a pedagogical function of documentary filmmaking in the appropriation of territory (nature, heritage, communities) and in the formation of criteria for authenticity; and (iii) a system of credibility where factual information reduces the gap between inspiration and the decision to travel. These

interpretations do not imply causality, but they provide a complementary explanatory framework for the perceived authenticity.

Furthermore, the differences between the two countries in the proportion of people who have traveled for audiovisual reasons (28% in Spain versus 35% in Colombia) expand upon previous findings regarding the capacity of audiovisual media to influence emerging markets. Studies such as those by Araújo Vila, Fraiz Brea, and De Carlos (2021) show that, in Spain, serialized fiction increases destination awareness and contributes to travel intentions; however, the results of this study suggest that, in Colombia, this mobilizing capacity is even stronger, likely due to the cultural relevance of documentary content and the emotional reception associated with local or national identity narratives. Along these lines, recent studies show how certain audiovisual franchises or sagas reinforce the destination's image and act as catalysts for induced tourism (Araújo Vila et al., 2024).

4.2. Generations and Formats: Narrative Immersion as an Explanatory Mechanism

The generational differences observed in both countries can be partly explained by the theory of narrative immersion, which posits that a viewer's ability to "enter" the story conditions their emotional and behavioral response. St-James, Darveau, and Fortin (2018) demonstrated that immersion in the film experience generates a psychoperceptual state that prolongs the experience beyond viewing and fosters tourist behaviors associated with the imagined journey.

In Spain, this phenomenon is especially visible among young people aged 18–34, who are primarily inspired by television series and films—precisely the formats that, according to Gómez-Morales et al. (2022), produce greater narrative continuity, identification with characters, and emotional engagement. Television series, for example, not only foster the development of emotional bonds but also generate “symbolic territories” that viewers integrate into their personal imagination, subsequently influencing travel decisions.

In Colombia, although young people also show high levels of engagement, fiction does not carry the same weight as in Spain. In this case, documentaries function as a preferred vehicle for immersion, likely associated with an educational, exploratory, and testimonial component, as Sánchez-Castillo et al. (2024) point out in their analysis of the symbolic and contextual nature of audiovisual narratives. This suggests that immersion depends not only on fiction but also on the degree to which the content—fictional or real—connects with the viewer's cultural values. Recent research on narrative transport in destination videos reinforces the idea that involvement in the story conditions attitudes and travel intentions (Cao et al., 2021).

4.3. Inspiration vs. Tourism Action: The Differential Role of Fiction and Documentary

One of the most relevant contributions of this study is the distinction between audiovisual inspiration and effective tourism activation. In Spain, although documentaries inspire a considerable percentage of the population, it is series (66%) and films (64%) that truly drive travel among those who ultimately take the trip. This result coincides with the findings of Sharma, Nicolau, and Mas (2022), who argue that fictional narratives, thanks to their emotional structure and the power of their storytelling, possess greater persuasive power in tourism decision-making than purely informative content. Along the same lines, it has been shown that certain audiovisual storytelling strategies, especially when they incorporate explicit persuasive elements, significantly increase the willingness to travel (Huerta-Viso et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024).

In Colombia, however, the relationship is different: documentaries not only inspire but also motivate, reaching 52% among those who have taken a cinematic trip. This pattern mirrors what has been observed in research on destinations where authenticity, nature, and territorial identity are central elements of the tourist experience. According to Zhang and Ramayah (2024), narratives based on factual storytelling have a

more direct effect on the construction of meaning about the destination, especially when they integrate elements of narrative truth and an emotional connection with the represented territory.

Therefore, while the Spanish model responds to an activation based on fiction —especially among young audiences—, the Colombian model is structured around the documentary as a catalyst for tourist behavior.

4.4. The Role of Gender in Audiovisual Reception and in Tourist Motivation

The results show that gender significantly influences how audiovisual content drives tourism. In Spain, women are more motivated by series and films, which aligns with audiovisual reception studies that highlight the greater emotional connection, narrative empathy, and intensive consumption of fiction by female audiences (Gómez-Morales et al*.,* 2022). This greater sensitivity to fiction could explain why women, in general, have a higher incidence of film tourism.

In Colombia, on the other hand, men show greater tourist activity, aligning with audiovisual consumption patterns in which film and documentaries have a strong presence among male audiences. This finding suggests that the relationship between gender and tourist motivation is also culturally dependent and cannot be homogeneously generalized across countries. This relational component between originators, formats, and audiences has also been observed in online destination marketing, where the narrator's role influences the impact of the story (Pachucki et al*.,* 2022).

4.5. Implications for Film Commissions and Destination Marketing

The differences identified between the two countries have direct implications for audiovisual-based tourism promotion strategies. The results suggest that Spain should continue to promote the presence of its regions in fiction productions—especially series—in line with Araújo Vila and Fraiz Brea's (2025) observations on the strategic importance of Film Commissions in linking audiovisual narratives with local development. These results are consistent with recent studies analyzing the activity of film commissions in Iberian contexts and their contribution to territorial and tourism development (Rodríguez-Martelo et al*.,* 2022). Fiction not only inspires young Spanish audiences but also influences their travel decisions, making series a valuable tool for international promotion.

In Colombia, however, the predominance of documentaries suggests that Film Commissions should strengthen their collaboration with production companies specializing in factual content, as well as promote projects that depict rural landscapes, biodiversity, or local communities—areas that offer significant opportunities for sustainable tourism positioning. This type of content can contribute not only to attracting visitors but also to generating cultural value and promoting more inclusive territorial development strategies. Complementarily, other research shows how the articulation between audiovisual policies and tourism promotion strategies relies on the coordinated action of film commissions at the European level (Cucco & Richeri, 2021; Araújo Vila et al*.,* 2024).

4.6. Contributions of the Study to the Field of Film Tourism

The results reinforce the idea that film tourism is not a homogeneous phenomenon, but rather a complex process that depends simultaneously on the narrative structure of the content, the sociodemographic characteristics of the audience, and the cultural context of reception. This study provides comparative evidence between two Spanish-speaking countries that exhibit notable differences in the content that inspires travel, in the content that actually activates it, in the influence of genre, in age segmentation, and in the social function that audiovisual media assumes in each environment. These contributions expand upon the research model on fiction-induced tourism proposed by Sánchez-Castillo et al. (2024) and show that the

distinction between inspiration and activation of tourism is not universal, but rather varies according to the predominant narratives and cultural codes that frame media reception in each market. Taken together, these findings are part of a line of research that combines film tourism, storytelling and digital narratives in the construction and dissemination of the destination image (Elshaer et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides empirical and comparative evidence on the influence of audiovisual content on tourism inspiration and activation in Spain and Colombia, two countries with shared media consumption patterns but with different responses to film tourism. The results lead to several conclusions that contribute to theoretical and applied advances in the field.

First, it is confirmed that audiovisual media is a significant driver of tourism motivation, although its impact varies between countries. While in Spain around a third of the population reports having traveled because of a film or series, in Colombia this proportion is even higher, demonstrating an ecosystem more receptive to the influence of audiovisual content. This difference is also reflected in the types of content that inspire travel: Spain shows a balance between fiction and documentary, while Colombia exhibits a clear predominance of factual content, especially documentaries.

Second, the sociodemographic analysis reveals that age is a key factor in the relationship between audiovisual consumption and tourism behavior. In Spain, young people aged 18–34 show the greatest activity and find their main motivation for travel in television series and films, suggesting the importance of serialized fiction in shaping tourism imaginaries among younger generations. In Colombia, although young people are also a key segment, inspiration is more heterogeneous, and documentaries are more prevalent among older audiences. This finding confirms that the relationship between audiovisual narratives and tourism motivation is structured differently depending on the cultural dynamics of media reception.

Third, significant differences are identified between tourist inspiration and action. In Spain, fiction—especially television series—acts as the main trigger for travel among those who ultimately decide to travel, while documentaries, despite inspiring a significant portion of the population, generate a lower level of activation. In Colombia, on the other hand, documentaries not only inspire but also motivate travel, reinforcing the idea that perceived authenticity and connection to real territorial narratives play a decisive role in this context. This contrast constitutes a significant contribution to the field of film tourism, demonstrating that fictional and non-fictional content act differently depending on the cultural environment.

Fourth, the results show that gender also influences the tourism response induced by audiovisual media. In Spain, women are more likely to travel based on series and films, while in Colombia, men show higher levels of activation. These differences suggest that the interaction between gender and audiovisual consumption is mediated by cultural patterns and the predominant narrative style in each country.

Finally, the study offers valuable implications for the design of tourism promotion strategies. In Spain, where serialized fiction has a high mobilizing capacity, it is pertinent for Film Commissions and local stakeholders to strengthen their collaboration with television series productions and transmedia narratives. In Colombia, the effectiveness of documentary content in activating tourism opens opportunities to promote productions that showcase landscapes, territories, and local communities from a factual perspective. In both cases, the results underscore the need to develop audiovisual and tourism policies that respond to the real profiles and motivations of the audiences.

In summary, this study demonstrates that film tourism is a dynamic and heterogeneous phenomenon, conditioned by the interaction between audiovisual narratives, sociodemographic characteristics, and cultural

contexts of reception. These findings expand the existing knowledge surrounding fiction-driven tourism and provide a solid foundation for the development of future comparative research, as well as for the consolidation of tourism promotion strategies adapted to contemporary audiences.

Limitations: The study is based on aggregated data, which prevents the estimation of net effects through multivariate analysis, the control of confounding variables—such as the intensity of audiovisual consumption, educational level, income, or travel frequency—and the establishment of causal relationships. Furthermore, panel sampling may introduce self-selection biases typical of online surveys. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as descriptive-comparative evidence and as a basis for hypotheses to be tested in subsequent studies.

Future research could incorporate microdata and multivariate models to more accurately estimate the conversion from inspiration to action, as well as longitudinal strategies that track changes by cohort and across the life cycle. Complementarily, it would be useful to incorporate reception metrics (engagement, identification, narrative immersion, exposure time) alongside behavioral indicators (information seeking, planning, bookings, retention) and qualitative methods that allow for the reconstruction of the cultural frameworks that make fiction in Spain or documentaries in Colombia more compelling.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The results obtained allow us to formulate a series of recommendations aimed at both tourism institutions and audiovisual organizations and public policy officials, in order to optimize promotion strategies based on audiovisual content in Spain and Colombia.

First, it is recommended that Film Commissions and Film Offices adapt their strategies to the consumption patterns of each country. In Spain, where serialized and cinematic fiction has a greater capacity to mobilize interest, it is pertinent to strengthen the participation of local regions in series productions and transmedia projects that integrate recognizable locations, emotional narratives, and characters with high relatability. In Colombia, on the other hand, it is advisable to prioritize collaboration with production companies specializing in documentaries and factual formats, given their high capacity to generate inspiration and stimulate tourism, especially among adult and senior audiences.

Second, it is recommended that tourism promotion agencies develop segmented campaigns based on sociodemographic groups. Young Spaniards and Colombians primarily respond to fictional narratives with episodic continuity, so strategies targeting this audience should incorporate storytelling elements, immersive experiences, and digital dynamics linked to series and films. For older segments, especially in Colombia, it is more effective to promote content associated with documentaries, natural heritage, culture, and real landscapes.

Third, it is suggested that territorial brands combine communication actions based on audiovisual exposure with accompanying tools that reduce the gap between inspiration and action—especially in Spain, where this difference is more pronounced. These actions include thematic campaigns linked to iconic locations, audiovisual routes, interpretive experiences, and digital content that strengthen the connection between the viewer and the destination.

Fourth, it is recommended that the educational and community dimensions be incorporated into Colombia's documentary-based strategies. This would make it possible to harness the potential of factual content to promote values associated with sustainable development, heritage protection, and social inclusion, generating benefits that go beyond the direct impact on tourism and strengthen local ownership.

Finally, it is suggested that future research delve deeper into the longitudinal analysis of these patterns, given the rapid evolution of audiovisual consumption and digital platforms. The integration of qualitative analyses, experimental studies, or techniques for tracking tourist behavior would allow for progress toward more complex explanatory models and a more detailed exploration of the relationship between audiovisual narrative, destination perception, and tourism decision-making.

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