

Speech by Commissioner for Tourism at 2nd International Conference  
on Impact of Movies and Television on Tourism (English only)

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Following is a speech by the Commissioner for Tourism, Miss Margaret Fong, at the 2nd International Conference on the Impact of Movies and Television on Tourism today (May 21):

Professor Chon, Mr Nisky, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the “Hollywood of the East”. You have come to the right place to talk about movies, television and tourism.

The Power of Movies

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Books capture our imagination and foster a desire to travel. The fascinating accounts of the Far East and its riches in The Travels of Marco Polo instilled a strong urge to travel amongst its readers at the time, and by some accounts, inspired Christopher Columbus to try to reach those lands via a western route. Montgomery’s writing of the adventures of freckled-faced Anne in Anne of the Green Gables, attracted generations of Canadians and foreigners alike to visit Prince Edward Island. Travel induced by novels has always been an important part of tourism.

If a book can have such an impact, and a picture is worth a thousand words, then the power of moving pictures is only limited by our imagination. Like travelling, movies allow one to take a snapshot of a different way of life, explore a foreign culture and experience the unexplainable. Movies have the power to transform how one sees a well-known travel destination, as Roman Holiday did for Rome. Movies even have the power to catapult less known destinations to the limelight as Slumdog Millionaire did for Dhavari. The ethics of such “reality tourism” may be the subject of a separate debate but the impact of movies on tourism is evident.

Movies project the complexity and richness of a destination much more effectively than any tourism brochures can ever hope to do. It adds images and colours to a tourism slogan, it tells us stories about the people we are going to meet, and provides a multi-dimensional experience even before we arrive at a destination.

Movie and tourism in Hong Kong

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Hong Kong understands the power of movies. A number of directors have captured nostalgic Hong Kong most vividly on the silver screen. Recent examples are *In the Mood for Love* and *Lust, Caution*. The stories behind the characters induce people to travel to learn more about the place and its history, to soak up the ambience created by the movie, and to retrace the characters' footsteps. Enchanted by the movie's storyline, quiet corners of a small restaurant featured in *In the Mood for Love* could become the most romantic spot for couples who have seen the movie. I have been there. I don't know whether you have. If you have not, you had better do it this time now.

With movies setting the scene, a little extra effort by the tourism promotion agency could make a major impact. Leveraging on the *Lust, Caution* movie fever in Taiwan, the Hong Kong Tourism Board collaborated with China Airlines to introduce group and independent visitor packages for a nostalgic and romantic journey to Hong Kong. The tour and suggested self-guided itineraries take visitors to locations featured in the movie, including a tram ride in Central, a stroll along Pottinger Street, and a visit to a Hong Kong-style tea bistro to experience the unique local lifestyle. The response was overwhelming from Taiwan. For those few hours, they entered the world of Tony Leung and Tang Wei and were mesmerised.

Nostalgia is but one facet of Hong Kong. Our unique filming locations, many of them also a "must-see" for visitors, are abundant –the International Financial Centre where Lara Croft parachuted down from the 88th floor, the world's longest outdoor escalator walkway system frequented by Batman, and the Star Ferry ride taken by James Bond are but some of the more notable examples. There are many hidden gems aching to be explored.

Hong Kong, renowned for its diversity, is a place where truly the East meets the West. Our home-grown festivals such as the Cheung Chau Bun Festival, Dragon Boat Races, and Fire Dragon Dance in Tai Hang are colourful and vibrant events steeped in tradition. Our culinary excellence ranges from Michelin Star restaurants to hole-in-the-wall noodle shops observing a hundred years of craftsmanship. Radio Television Hong Kong and NHK of Japan have jointly produced a TV programme known as *The Taste of Happiness* with a story line that married the traditions of noodle cooking with a love story. It was broadcast in Japan early this year as part of *The Hong Kong - Japan Tourism Exchange Year*. We are hopeful that this will bring us many visitors from Japan.

Our living culture was also captured by CNBC World in its *Let's Shop* programme in August 2008. It featured the traditional and modern landscapes of Wan Chai,

including a century-old pawnshop revitalised as a trendy restaurant. Hong Kong was also selected by NBC as the first city outside the United States for its travel and lifestyle programme, LX: First Look, which introduced our cosmopolitan offerings and Chinese antique shops to the US audience in the March just past.

And of course we must not forget our kung fu heritage, which includes the universal kung fu icon Bruce Lee, wing chun grandmaster Ip Man, and our very own Jackie Chan. Together with the owner of Bruce Lee's former Hong Kong home, we will restore the property to the days when Bruce Lee lived there and open it for visitors to pay tribute to this well-loved kung fu legend.

As I said at the beginning, the power of movies is only limited by our imagination. With a little creativity, all the sights, traditions, and heritage I mentioned could become the film set or story line for the next hit on the silver screen and the Government stands ready to help make that happen. The Government has established a Film Services Office which provides one-stop and free services to filmmakers who choose Hong Kong as their filming location. If you have any plans for filming in Hong Kong, I encourage you to make the Film Services Office your first point of contact.

#### Concluding Remarks

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Ladies and gentlemen, tourism and films appeal to our emotions, stimulate our imagination and indulge our fantasies. They are "dream factories" which add spice to our daily lives. Events such as today's conference allow the two industries to come together and exchange ideas on how they can join hands to inspire audiences and travellers round the world. I wish you all a very fruitful conference and hope you will find time during your stay to explore and experience Hong Kong, whether for location scouting or plain sight-seeing. For those in film production, I hope you will find our city a source of inspiration and look forward to seeing a new facet of Hong Kong through your cameras in the not too distant future.

Thank you.

Ends/Thursday, May 21, 2009

Issued at HKT 16:27