

DREAM SALES FOR TRAVEL AGENTS



MIAMI MAGIC... with David Jason and Nicholas Lyndhurst.

Last year is best forgotten as most travel agents are concerned, but things seem to be looking up in 1992. Much of the good news is due to the film and TV industry and surprisingly not to the travel programmes. The fact that many people are unable to distinguish between soap operas and real life seems to be responsible for boosting sales to many overseas locations. If the characters portrayed are only make-believe, the majority of locations are real.

According to Keith Bettons of ABTA, many viewers identify with this fact as much as with their favourite characters. "The screen actually sells a dream which we're trying to obtain - says Keith - that's why they're so successful". The latest statistics seem to follow a trend set by the film industry over recent years. Despite the little-known fact that "Sherley Valentine" was filmed in Mykonos, interest in the Greek islands generally doubled. It was selling a dream and obviously there are thousands who could identify with being lonely and who wanted to get away from their boring jobs to find romance. ABTA has been monitoring the effect of TV on tourism for many years. Travel agents have reported a 25 per cent increase in Brittany ferry crossings since the Larkin family travelled abroad in the "Darling Buds of May". Florida bookings look set to increase following the Christmas screening of the popular TV comedy "Only Fools and Horses" set in the Sunshine State.

Some of the most successful films in marketing terms have been "Crocodile Dundee", "Jewel in the Crown", "Passage to India" and "Gandhi", all of which sold a life style and a dream. As prices come down exotic locations become more attainable and the screen influence becomes ever greater.

So, should more holiday companies be investing their valuable advertising money into destination placement on the large and small screen? Well, it certainly seems worth considering a slot for your Nile Cruise during the epic "Death on the Nile" ... that is if it's not being screened by the BBC ... otherwise try advertising around the holiday programmes on TV and radio. ABTA are convinced that the public is receptive to the effective use of your advertising budget.

In fact, many tour companies and National tourist offices are trying to woo producers and directors to their directions to have a look. After all, they need to find the right locations.

By the way, look out Nottingham ... "Robin Hood" is on release!

Rosemary Plum

