

Client: Nicola Prior
Source: The Herald (Main)
Date: 24 December 2018
Page: 2
Reach: 27655
Size: 187cm2
Value: 1202.41

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Desire for 'bragger's rights' helps earn £821m boost

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SELFIE-MAD young travellers are flocking to Scotland, to take "trophy pics" at the spectacular Harry Potter viaduct and other film or TV landmarks.

They are fuelling an £821 million tourist boom, according to visitor figures.

VisitScotland says travellers in their teens and 20s are taking more mini-breaks to see sights such as Dunnottar Castle in Aberdeenshire, which was the inspiration for Brave, and the Glenfinnan Viaduct in the Highlands, as seen in the Harry Potter films.

Skye, a location for Star Wars and Prometheus is a big draw, and Outlander has been filmed at venues across Scotland.

Young visitors crave "bragger's rights" – being the first in their peer group to visit unusual destinations, without splashing out on a foreign holiday.

People aged 16 to 34 from around the UK are also spending more cash than ever in Scotland – £821m last year, up from £663m the year before, a rise of 24 per cent.

The big draw for the selfie generation are Scottish locations that have appeared in Hollywood films and in TV series, making them "braggable"

on social media. Scotland is now a destination of choice for young people who live in the UK and whose salaries often struggle to keep up with their desire for new experiences.

Katie Johnson, director of Rockin Vans, a Scottish campervan company, said: "It's about getting the perfect selfie on a budget. We get people who go specifically to the Harry Potter bridge. They jump out of the van, get the selfie and move on."

"Young people want to spend money on experiences rather than things now and that's had a big effect on our business. Our customers are not interested in designer clothes and handbags. They want to travel."

The number of trips to Scotland taken by young people from the rest of the UK has risen by 7% in a year, from 2.8 million in 2016 to more than 3m last year – one-quarter of total UK visitors.

The total spent last year by domestic visitors was just over £3 billion, meaning young people account for 27% of the tourist spend.

Malcolm Roughead, chief executive of VisitScotland, said: "This generation is one of the largest in history and represents an important market."

"This research will give us a greater understanding of what young visitors want from a holiday."



■ Youngsters want photos of film sites, such as Glenfinnan Viaduct.