Global Travel Insight

Bath is latest travel destination to benefit from popular TV show

An increase in visitors to Bath and North East Somerset—where a popular TV series was filmed—appears to have aided travel recovery to the region. The show was primarily filmed on location there and promoted the city as a key tourism destination. An analysis of data from the Visa International Travel (VISIT) platform* shows a trend in tourist arrivals to Bath and North East Somerset, and their spending behavior following the release of the TV show, *Bridgerton*. With the ability to reach audiences around the globe, movies and TV shows have an impact beyond mere entertainment. It is not uncommon for movies and TV series to use embedded advertising or product placements that implicitly promote certain products and services. A byproduct of that, intended or not, is the emergence of certain cities, venues or attractions as key tourism destinations.

Notably, one study found that almost 80 million tourists were motivated by films and TV to travel to certain destinations in 2018, double the 40 million reported in 2012.[1] Fan interest in visiting filming locations featured in popular films and television shows has driven travel to a variety of destinations including, among others: Croatia, Spain, Malta and Scotland.[2] With the emergence of multiple streaming platforms and rising investment in film production, the influence of movies and TV shows on consumer travel decisions is likely to grow.

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Key Points:

Visitor arrivals to Bath improved after the release of *Bridgerton*

Bridgerton's appeal extends beyond English-speaking countries

Travel-related spend in Bath from select countries improved

Bridgerton's popularity extends beyond just English-speaking countries

Released in December 2020, *Bridgerton* quickly ascended to become one of the top record-breaking shows on Netflix. The show was watched by more than 82 million Netflix households in its first 28 days. It was the most watched show in 83 countries, including the U.S., India, Brazil, the U.K. and France.[3]

The show maintained its strong momentum, with the season two premiere breaking the record for the most-watched English-language series on Netflix in its first three days.[4] The city of Bath estimates that *Bridgerton* has contributed at least £1.5 million to the local economy from domestic visitors alone. Given the show's release during a period of heightened social distancing measures and substantial restrictions on cross-border travel throughout the world, measuring its direct impact on tourism is complicated. However, **certain data patterns suggest that** *Bridgerton* **likely aided in driving some tourism recovery in Bath and North East Somerset, and promoted Bath as a key destination.**

Figure 1: Recovery in inbound travel to the U.K.
(By city, indexed to 2019 levels)
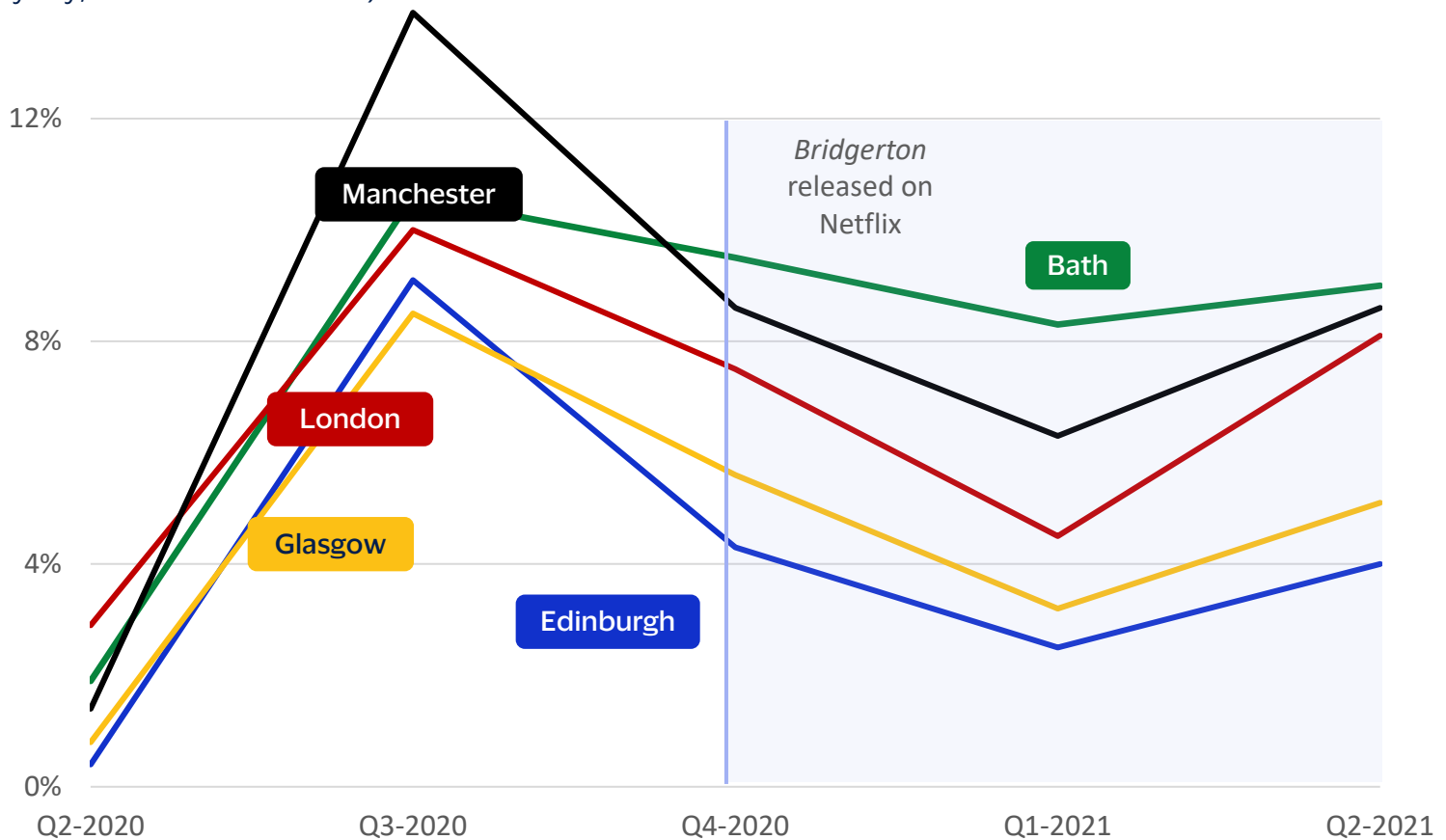
Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights, Visa International Travel (VISIT) database. * VISIT is an econometric model that estimates travel flows between different corridors based on consumer card activity.

# Fan base emerges from show in Qatar and Japan

Based on the recovery rate in inbound tourism to the U.K. by city, Bath and North East Somerset stood out as the least sensitive to travel restrictions in the first half of 2021 compared to other U.K. cities.

By Q1-2021, three months after *Bridgerton* was released and when restrictions on international travel were still tight, Bath and North East Somerset recovered around 8.3 percent of the number of tourist arrivals it had in Q1-2019, according to the Visa International Travel (VISIT) platform.[5] The same pattern was observed in Q2-2021, with Bath and North East Somerset maintaining its position as one of the top recovering cities in the U.K. for inbound tourism compared to 2019 levels, outperforming the most popular destinations in the U.K., including London, Manchester and Edinburgh (Figure 1).

The show's popularity even extended beyond English-speaking countries. *Bridgerton* reportedly ranked among the top 10 TV shows on Netflix in Turkey and Qatar for 116 days and 114 days, respectively.[6] Examining inbound travel trends to the U.K. by country of origin reveals some noteworthy insights, particularly from Qatar and Japan. While London still accounted for the largest share of tourism spend in the U.K. (almost 40 percent), when including spending by Qatari and Japanese tourists (Figure 2), Bath appeared to gradually gain interest and momentum, particularly after the release of *Bridgerton*, possibly suggesting the positive impact of the show in driving tourism and tourism spend.

For Qatari tourists to the U.K., the share of Bath and North East Somerset in their total number of travel-related [7] transactions surged from 4 percent of the total in Q1-2019 to 14 percent in Q1-2021, a whopping 10 percentage point increase (Figure 3). Qatari travel-related spending in Bath and North East Somerset jumped from 2 percent of their overall spend in the U.K. in Q1-2019 to 13 percent in Q1-2021, while Qatari spending in restaurants in Bath and North East Somerset surged from a miniscule number in Q1-2019 to 9 percent of total restaurant spend in the U.K. in Q1-2021. Similarly, the share of Bath and North East Somerset in Japanese tourists' total number of travel-related transactions in the U.K. spiked from 1 percent in Q1-2019 to 12 percent in Q1-2021, while the increase in spend was less pronounced, rising from 1 percent of their total U.K. spend to 2 percent over the same period.

Figure 2: Recovery in inbound travel to the U.K
(By country of origin, indexed to 2019 levels)
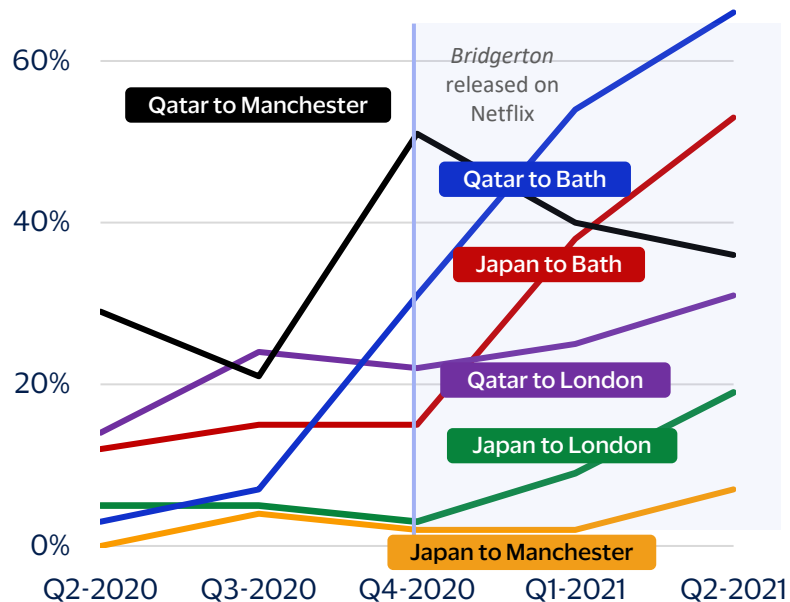
Source: Visa International Travel database

Figure 3: Bath and North East Somerset's share of total number of travel-related transactions in the U.K. for travelers (by country of origin)
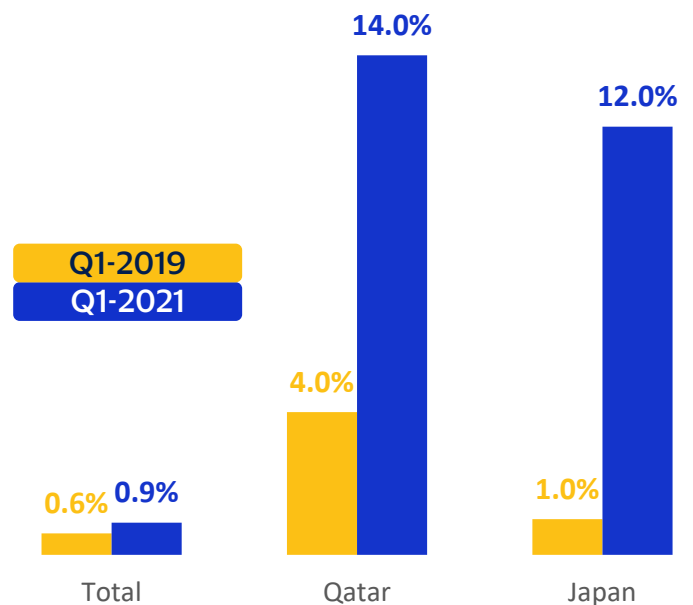
Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights, VisaNet

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Visa International Travel (VISIT) Methodology

Visa International Travel (VISIT) platform is a proprietary model that combines Visa's transaction data with publicly-available cross-border arrival statistics. The database provides a comprehensive view into high-frequency cross-border travel flows, currently encompassing over 100 origin and destination countries (based on information from the United Nations), which collectively account for more than 85 percent of global travel. VISIT combines unique counts of Visa credentials that register a face-to-face transaction at a merchant outside their home country in a given calendar month with other transaction data such as average spend per credential, card usage patterns at lodging merchants and others. Visa uses this depersonalized and aggregated data to model official arrival statistics compiled by various government sources and to generate estimates that fill in the large gaps existing in the cross-border travel data.

Footnotes

1. Academy of Strategic Management Journal, Analysis of the Impact of Film Tourism on Tourist Destinations, 2021. https://www.abacademies.org/articles/analysis-of-the-impact-of-film-tourism-on-tourist-destinations-11323.html

2. The impact of TV series on tourism performance: the case of Game of Thrones, March 2022. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00181-022-02228-2#:~:text=The%20results%20show%20a%20positive,flows%20in%20the%20filming%20locations.

3. "'Bridgerton': How a Bold Bet Turned Into Our Biggest Series Ever", Netflix, January 2021. https://about.netflix.com/en/news/bridgerton-biggest-series-ever

4. "The Viscount beat the Duke: Bridgerton season 2 becomes most popular Netflix series of all time", NetflixLife, April 2022. https://netflixlife.com/2022/04/19/viscount-beat-duke-bridgerton-season-2-most-popular-netflix-series-all-time/

5. The Visa International Travel (VISIT) platform is a proprietary model that combines Visa's cardholder data with publicly-available cross-border arrival statistics. Visa uses this data to econometrically model official arrival statistics compiled by various government sources and to generate estimates that fill in the large gaps existing in the cross-border travel data.

6. "Bridgerton TOP 10", Flix Patrol. https://flixpatrol.com/title/bridgerton/top10/

7. Travel-related spend includes spend on airlines, hotels, travel agencies, and car rentals in-country.

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Accessibility Notes

Figure 1: Line chart showing the comparative recovery in inbound travel to the U.K. by city. In Edinburgh, inbound travel ranged from 0.4% in Q2-2020 to 9.1% in Q3-2020, 4.3% in Q4-2020, 2.5% in Q1-2021, and 4.0% in Q2-2021. In Glasgow, travel ranged from 0.8% in Q2-2020 to 8.5% in Q3-2020, 5.6% in Q4-2020, 3.2% in Q1-2021, and 5.1% in Q2-2021. In London, travel ranged from 2.9% in Q2-2020 to 10.0% in Q3-2020, 7.5% in Q4-2020, 4.5% in Q1-2021, and 8.1% in Q2-2021. In Manchester, travel ranged from 1.4% in Q2-2020 to 13.9% in Q3-2020, 8.6% in Q4-2020, 6.3% in Q1-2021, and 8.6% in Q2-2021. In Bath, travel ranged from 1.9% in Q2-2020 to 10.6% in Q3-2020, 9.5% in Q4-2020, 8.3% in Q1-2021, and 9.0% in Q2-2021.

Figure 2: Line chart showing the comparative recovery in inbound travel to the U.K. cities by travelers' country of origin. Travel recovery to Bath and North East Somerset was particularly noticeable for travelers from Japan and Qatar following the release of the show. From Japan to Bath and North East Somerset, travel recovery ranged from 12% in Q2-2020 to 15% in Q3-2020, 15% in Q4-2020, 38% in Q1-2021, and 53% in Q2-2021. Meanwhile for travelers from Japan to London, travel recovery ranged from 5% in Q2-2020 to 5% in Q3-2020, 3% in Q4-2020, 9% in Q1-2021, and 19% in Q2-2021. And similarly for travelers from Japan to Manchester, travel recovery ranged from 0% in Q2-2020 to 4% in Q3-2020, 2% in Q4-2020, 2% in Q1-2021, and 7% in Q2-2021. From Qatar to Bath and North East Somerset, travel recovery ranged from 3% in Q2-2020 to 7% in Q3-2020, 31% in Q4-2020, 54% in Q1-2021, and 66% in Q2-2021. Meanwhile for travelers from Qatar to London, travel recovery ranged from 14% in Q2-2020 to 24% in Q3-2020, 22% in Q4-2020, 25% in Q1-2021, and 31% in Q2-2021. And similarly for travelers from Qatar to Manchester, travel recovery ranged from 29% in Q2-2020 to 21% in Q3-2020, 51% in Q4-2020, 40% in Q1-2021, and 36% in Q2-2021.

Figure 3: Bar chart showing the share of Bath and North East Somerset in the total number of transactions in the U.K. for international tourists. The share of transactions in Bath and North East Somerset for all travelers increased from 0.6 percent of total transactions in Q1 2019 to 0.9 percent in Q1 2021 following the release of the show. For tourists from Qatar, it went from 4 percent in Q1 2019 to 14 percent in Q1 2021, while for Japanese tourists, the share of transactions in Bath and North East Somerset went from 1 percent to 12 percent over the same period.

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