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Literary Heritage and Tourism Experience: An Analysis of Online Reviews of Shakespeare's Residence

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Abstract

The research paper explores how literary heritage sites should be managed to promote tourism, using Shakespeare's residence in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, as an example. For this purpose, visitors' reviews from the TripAdvisor website are collected and analysed. This article examines factors that impact tourists' experience of visiting Shakespeare's birthplace and explores major concerns of the visitors about this literary heritage site. Determining that the majority of consumers discussed perceived service quality, perceived value for money, and authenticity, this study contributes to the topic by providing some significant areas of tourists' concerns, drawing on analyses of their reviews. These findings provide insight for literary heritage site managers to provide successful tourist experiences to their visitors.

Keywords: Literary Heritage, Museum Management, Shakespeare residence, Tourism, Cultural site, TripAdvisor.

Introduction

Tourists draw great inspiration from literature, and literary tourism is a developing field within the global tourism industry. Literary heritage has become a significant component of travel itineraries; meanwhile, problems concerning how to strike the right balance between preservation, accessibility, and commercialisation arise in the management of literary cultural sites. The study aims to provide an understanding of factors

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involved in the arrangements of literary heritage for promoting tourism based on reviews of the visitors, as literary tourism has developed into a substantial commercial phenomenon¹.

Literary heritage tourism is particularly significant in the United Kingdom, where literary history serves as a major selling factor for the travel and tourism sector. A writer's birthplace or final resting places are no longer literary locales by accident of history; rather, they are social creations that have been made, emphasized, and promoted to entice tourists². Literary tourism promotes the preservation of cultural heritage. The physical locations where authors were born and raised are regarded as cultural heritage. As a result, maintaining, restoring, and interpreting these locations in line with the principle of authenticity will both boost tourism to the area and help ensure the long-term survival of these cultural heritage elements.³.

At Stratford-upon-Avon, William Shakespeare spent his formative years, which is now known as Shakespeare's Birthplace as well. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust presently owns and operates it as a modest museum that is accessible to the general public and a popular tourist destination. It's a contemporary building. It has been a tourist site since the 18th Century and has been contributing to the literary legacy of England and the tourism industry⁴.

This study looks at how tourists are attracted and affected by the place and how people interact with it, how they perceive it, and how a variety of tourist experiences, e.g. live performances, visiting exhibitions, and guided tours to Stratford-upon-Avon, enable visitors to interact with Shakespeare's legacy. The site now receives a continuous stream of visitors from all over the world.

¹ Anne Hoppen, Lorraine Brown, and Alan Fyall, "Literary Tourism: Opportunities and Challenges for the Marketing and Branding of Destinations?" *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 3, no. 1 (2014): 37–47.

² David Herbert, "Literary Places, Tourism and the Heritage Experience," *Annals of Tourism Research* 28, no. 2 (2001): 312–33.

³ Samet Çevik, "Literary Tourism as a Field of Research Over the Period 1997–2016," *European Journal of Tourism Research* 24 (2020): 2407.

⁴ Çevik, "Literary Tourism as a Field of Research Over the Period 1997–2016,".

The most influential source of information for travel decisions has become and remains online reviews in literary tourism⁵. Despite the extensive use of online reviews in research, very few studies have specifically examined online reviews in the context of the attraction industry⁶. Online reviews have a big impact on tourists' decisions. People prefer to take advantage of others' experiences through social media and review sites. Reviews have become important as they give customers an opportunity to test experience and service quality for the best decisions. Studying online reviews for research purposes more effectively is profitable for practitioners in the travel industry. We need to analyze online reviews carefully and provide accurate results.

The authors collected online reviews and conducted thematic analyses of these reviews reflecting the importance of visiting Shakespeare's birthplace. For many, the trip is a way to honor one of the greatest writers in history. Others are drawn by the chance to interact with history and culture or just to take in the beauty of the surrounding area. Efficient management and promotion of such places can play an important role in the tourism industry. Also, in developing societies that have a rich literary heritage, it can be promoted. The present study aims to contribute to knowledge with findings that are practical and feasible for future implementation.

With the help of *WebHarvy*, we were able to extract 300 reviews for this study from the *TripAdvisor* platform on Shakespeare's house. The *TripAdvisor* has previously been used as a database in the tourism and marketing fields to perform thematic analysis. It is a valuable marketing tool for tourism operators and businesses⁷.

After collecting the reviews, the authors conducted the thematic analysis that helped them classify different customer views about the site. For this

⁵ Seul Kim and Youn-Kyung Kim, "Regulatory Framing in Online Hotel Reviews: The Moderating Roles of Temporal Distance and Temporal Orientation," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 50 (2022): 139–47.

⁶ Yaniv Guo *et al.*, "Online Feedback and Attraction Management: An Exploration of the Critical Factors in Effective Operations," *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 21, no. 8 (2016): 883–904.

⁷ Camelia Surugiu, Marius R. Surugiu, and Costel Grădinaru. "Targeting Creativity Through Sentiment Analysis: A Survey on Bucharest City Tourism," *SAGE Open* 13, no. 2 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231167346>.

procedure, the authors conducted manual thematic analyses following the technique of Gursoy.⁸

Literature Review

Literary places gained major attraction in the tourism industry. Literary tourism converts readers into potential visitors, which channels literature into economic growth as it has the potential to contribute to the economy. These locations are social constructs that have been created, accentuated, and promoted to attract tourists. We may assume that valorisation and interpretation of literary heritage sites make use of these places as symbols to describe writers' works and evoke the cultural landscape created by them⁹. To experience this energy and presence, people from all over the world visit these places passionately. Tourism businesses need to understand what makes visitors' experience memorable.

When we think of the tourist experience comprehensively, involving a variety of aspects, the complexity of a memorable tourist experience becomes clear. A series of interconnected dynamics that involve future tourism decisions are based on the customer's whole experience from travelling to returning and later reflecting upon it. So, it is very important how they feel during the whole journey. Tourism businesses can encourage revisits by helping tourists make memories of pleasant aspects of their experiences. The happier a tourist is, the greater the chances of their return. Tourism experience is a collection of experiences that one encounters while he is travelling.

Previously, a large number of studies have been conducted on this subject¹⁰. Stated that Hedonism, refreshment, social interaction and local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty are the seven dimensions that contribute to Memorable Tourism Experiences

⁸ Dogan Gursoy, Oguz Akova, and Omer Atsiz. "Understanding the Heritage Experience: A Content Analysis of Online Reviews of World Heritage Sites in Istanbul," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 20, no. 3 (2022): 311–34.

⁹ J. Arcos-Pumarola. "Assessing Literary Heritage Policies in the Context of Creative Cities," *Journal of Spatial and Organizational Dynamics* 7, no. 4 (2019): 275–90.

¹⁰ J. H. Kim. "The Antecedents of Memorable Tourism Experiences: The Development of a Scale to Measure the Destination Attributes Associated with Memorable Experiences," *Tourism Management* 44 (2014): 34–45.

(MTEs). According to¹¹Hosseini *et al.*, the ten dimensions that contribute to MTEs are: local culture, variety of activities, infrastructure, environment management, accessibility, hospitality, physiography, place attachment, and superstructure. In addition to differentiating or attracting more tourists as a competitive advantage against perceived increased competition between locations, memorable tourist experiences may also be utilized to foster engagement and loyalty between places and the return of visitors. Mirroring previous methods, the present study provides four major dimensions that affected customers' experience of Shakespeare's House based on their reviews on *TripAdvisor*. These dimensions are engagement, authenticity, perceived value for money, and perceived service quality.

Method

User-generated reviews from the website *TripAdvisor* are collected to study the aspects that contributed to visitors' memorable literary tourism experiences at Shakespeare's birthplace. It is crucial to look at how visitors perceive their experience. The current study made use of one of the most advised research techniques for doing such a study. After compiling reviews with the use of the *WebHarvey* software, we carried out thematic analyses manually. We analysed the corpus of literary tourism literature, visitors' reviews, and relevant concepts in-depth. This will help in formulating a theoretical framework and identifying any gaps in the body of existing research. Though user-generated reviews can offer insightful information, be aware that they might not represent the experiences of all literary tourists in general. Therefore, it is essential to carefully analyse the data to gain a deeper understanding of literary tourist experiences.

Results and Discussion

Every other review mentioned that the trip was overpriced and that the time allotted for the tour was insufficient; however, the ticket had multiple entries, so they felt relieved. On the other hand, the location is praised by everyone as a great literary historical site. Special praise is given to the tour guides, who were polite, well-informed, helpful, conscientious, hardworking, instructive, and kind, but at times overexcited to deliver

¹¹ Seyed Hosseini, Rocío Cortes-Macías, and Francisco Almeida-García. "Extending the Memorable Tourism Experience Construct: An Investigation of Tourists' Memorable Dark Experiences," *Journal of Vacation Marketing* (2022): <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667221113078>.

information. The surroundings of the house had a significant impact on how the visitors felt about their entire visit to Stratford-upon-Avon, and the numerous opportunities to see nearby historic sites made their experience memorable and inspired a desire to return. Most of these consumers expressed awe, intrigue, contentment, and an urge to stay longer at the end of the visit, which may result in future returns.

The tourists' main complaints were about the online booking process, unclear instructions, payment errors resulting from misunderstandings, non-refunding payments, and a lack of assistance from desk staff. An ever-growing number of visitors to the area suggests that, where a cultural heritage successfully displays its authenticity and originality, overpricing may not be relevant. However, if perceived quality and value for money are not met, customers will not return, regardless of how rich and authentic the location may be. The writer's global appeal draws in visitors to his birthplace, and there is little indication that they will return to visit it in the future. At the absolute least, the place should train its guides to distinguish between those who require knowledge and those who already know Shakespeare well and are interested in being there to immerse themselves in the writer's world. They must be able to balance the dissemination of information. If nothing else, they ought to determine who needs information and who would prefer to be left alone to experience the life of their favourite author. The desk staff should be trained to deal with customers' dissatisfaction and provide them with sympathetic answers, and the online booking system should be effective and user-friendly. The following are recurring codes in the reviews.

Cluster 1: Advance, Area, Booking, Price, School, Tour Guide, Trip, Tour Guide

Cluster 2: Artefact, Birthplace, Knowledge, Knowledgeable Staff

Cluster 3: Money, Worth

Cluster 4: Actual House, QR Code, Entry, Line, Entrance

Authenticity

Viewing the above clusters and results of manual analysis, it is found that Authenticity is a very important point of discussion in reviews an interesting aspect of literary research. It is important to know that the place you are visiting is genuinely delivering what it promises to present. Authenticity implies traditional culture and origin and a sense of the real.

People have a nostalgic attachment to bygone times and seek to momentarily recreate them through tourism. Nostalgia determines the importance of authenticity¹². The preservation and presentation of the real historical and cultural components connected with literary works and their authors are referred to as maintaining literary tourism's authenticity. It entails giving visitors memorable experiences by faithfully capturing the literary legacy and its setting. The authenticity of tourist destinations and the satisfaction of visitors, practitioners and researchers are concerned with the planning, marketing, and management of heritage tourism in relation to places, events, cultures, and experiences¹³.

Destinations must maintain historical accuracy in their exhibitions, tours, and interactive activities to ensure literary tourism authenticity. In order to accurately represent the author and their work, reliable primary and secondary materials, such as correspondence, manuscripts, and biographies should be included. In Shakespeare's house, these aspects represent the true essence of Shakespeare's world. Codes like historic, 16th Century, beautifully restored, quite substantial half-timbered house, the artefacts are genuine and transported back in time, reflect the authenticity of the experience. It is very important for them to feel genuine and authentic. Authenticity is crucial in sustaining this industry, as it ensures that tourists get an authentic and memorable experience, leading to positive word-of-mouth promotion and potential repeat visits. The following reviews reflect reviewers' perspectives on the authenticity of the place.

The house is well preserved and sympathetically restored. It recreates a picture of family life at the time of Shakespeare, complete with period domestic furnishings. One curiosity is a glass window inscribed with the signatures of visitors to the house over the centuries. You'll also see John Shakespeare's glove-making workshop - John was William Shakespeare's father. There's information available about each room and also guides throughout the complex to provide you with information and to answer

¹² Deepak Chhabra, Robert Healy, and Erin Sills. "Staged Authenticity and Heritage Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 30, no. 3 (2003): 702–19.

¹³ Eunju Park, Byungkyoo Choi, and Taejun Lee. "The Role and Dimensions of Authenticity in Heritage Tourism," *Tourism Management* 74 (2019): 99–109.

your questions. A couple of guides were a bit overzealous, making sure you were recipients of their information regardless of whether or not you wanted it. I'm not a fan of that kind of intrusive information; if I want to know, I'll ask. Overall, you'll get a good picture of Shakespeare's family life as a youngster. (A review).

Perceived value for money

Value for money is a very important aspect of tourism research, and a great number of studies have been conducted for decades¹⁴. A consumer's assessment of a product or service's utility is referred to as value for money. Research consistently shows that it significantly affects consumer behavior intentions and customer satisfaction. In the present case, customers talked a lot about it. For them, the tour was expensive. The time allotted for the visit was too short. A large number of complaints about the short time for the visit are observed in reviews. Customer satisfaction in the context of literary tourism is extremely important. Travellers' general happiness increases when they believe that they had a fair and good experience for the money they spent on their literary tourism vacation. As an example, consider how customer satisfaction in literary tourism is influenced by value for money. Literary tourists are more likely to be satisfied when they believe their expectations were met and that the cost of their trip was justified by the caliber of the literary sites they visited, the accommodation they stayed in, and the overall experience. Keeping customers' expectations in check by being open and honest about the schedule, amenities, and price before their trip. Effective communication guarantees that clients know what to anticipate, lowering the possibility of disappointment and raising satisfaction. Codes like pricey, worth it, 3 sites to visit on one ticket, and combined tickets reflect reviewers' concern about the value for money. Tour operators and destination managers may help consumers have pleasant and fulfilling experiences in literary tourism by concentrating on providing value for money.

I do not think that, at €18 per person, this is value for money and a more realistic price would be half of this. (A reviewer opinion).

¹⁴ Kansal, Walia, and Goel. *Factors Affecting Perception of Value for Money*, 93.

This felt a bit expensive, you realise that it is worth every penny. (review).

Perceived Service Quality

Customers' assessment of a company's general uniqueness or dominance is known as perceived service quality¹⁵. Customers expressed their satisfaction with the staff of Shakespeare's house. They were impressed by the overall engagement and warmth. To provide visitors with interesting experiences of literary places, events, and destinations connected with renowned writers and literary works, customer care is a crucial component to focus on. However, there is a need for improvement in the training of tour guides, as in literary tourism generally tourists are well aware of writers' lives and it becomes challenging to balance their interest. The staff must have advanced knowledge of literature and the destinations being presented in order to guarantee a great and happy experience. Their enthusiasm will spread to the audience and improve their experience. In tourism, one of the key elements that determines whether a place succeeds or fails is dependent on the quality of the service. This is because service quality affects service delivery and performance, which affects customer satisfaction¹⁶. An efficient team is essential to literary tourism. They ought to be able to provide interesting anecdotes and tales about the authors and literary figures, adding to the experience's educational and entertaining qualities. Through themed events, performances, and activities, a person who understands the actual essence of the literary world a writer created can recreate it for tourists. People with disabilities should be provided with great service by staff, and they should take into account the needs of all visitors. They should be fully informed about accessibility and the amenities available there. To improve the overall visitor experience, staff should swiftly address problems or complaints. Literary destinations may offer unique experiences that satisfy the needs of literature lovers and cultivate greater respect for literature and its influence on culture and history by concentrating on effective customer care in literary tourism.

¹⁵ A. Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithaml, and Leonard L. Berry. "Servqual: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perception," *Journal of Retailing* 64, no. 1 (1988): 12–40.

¹⁶ V. J. Nomnga. "The Effectiveness of Service Quality and the Role of Customer Care in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector," in *Mbali Conference 2022 Proceedings*, 454.

... Treated like second-class citizens, only to be allowed to enter after those who had bought tickets online; not everyone can purchase tickets online, so I don't imagine we, and others hoping to pay on entry, are such an anomaly. (review)

Once inside, we enjoyed the Shakespeare Birthplace experience, but our treatment at the entrance did create a poor impression and affected the overall experience. (review)

Conclusion

In this study, Shakespeare's home in Stratford-upon-Avon is studied, highlighting important aspects impacting visitors' experiences at literary heritage sites. The *TripAdvisor* reviews indicated that tourist satisfaction is greatly influenced by perceived service quality, value for money, and authenticity. By addressing these issues, heritage site managers can improve the whole experience and more successfully satisfy the expectations of visitors. Managers should prioritize infrastructure, staff training, and visitor communication to raise perceived service quality. Perceived value for money can be improved through open pricing practices and by providing experiences that are worth the money. Lastly, upholding authenticity through the preservation of historical accuracy and providing tourists with real, immersive experiences would encourage stronger satisfaction. Viewing the enormous economic success of Shakespeare's birthplace museum as a tourist site, future researchers may apply the framework of the present study to literary tourism in Pakistan, for example, in the context of literary legendary figures like Allama Muhammad Iqbal's residence.