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### Role, Importance and Power of Museums as Centers of Tourism Education and Learning

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**Abstract:** Museums have increasingly developed into influential tourism education centers through the promotion of learning, cultural engagement, and tourism destination awareness. This research paper adopts an approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies to research the role, significance, and educational effectiveness of museums within the context of the tourism industry. Data was collected using the structured questionnaire method among tourists visiting 312 museums to undertake the research and analyze tourism education and the learner outcomes within the tourism industry through multiple regression and structural equation models. Informed primary data was also collected through the process of conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 museum professionals using the open-ended survey method for the purpose of complementing the research outcomes within the defined research paper scope and objectives. It concludes that there is an indirect positive correlation between the experiential learning levels of the public and the tourism knowledge and revisit and recommend factors among tourists visiting the destinations.

**Keywords:** Museums; Tourism Education; Experiential Learning; Cultural Awareness; Visitor Satisfaction; Behavioral Intentions; Museum-Based Learning; Heritage Tourism; Mixed-Methods Research; Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).



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## Introduction

Museums were conventionally known as organizations or bodies focused on preserving, accumulating, and showcasing cultural, historical, and art objects. Within the last few decades, there has been an enormous transformation, leading to museums becoming pivotal spaces for educational initiatives and an influential force within the tourism industry. With the growing importance of cultural travel, educational travel, and sustainable tourism on the global tourism map, museums have turned out to be crucial educational hubs for the tourism industry.

Tourism education is not limited to formal learning environments in the classroom but encompasses learning that occurs in informal or experiential settings where tourists derive knowledge, achieve cultural understanding, or develop attitudes concerning destinations or host communities. This occurs in museums, which create these learning contexts in terms of their strategic presentation, interaction, or programming that fosters effective learning for different groups. In this aspect, museums play a role in promoting greater tourist understanding concerning local histories, identity, or culture, thereby complementing the tourist experience.

The role that museums play in the context of educational tourism is supported by the role that these play in shaping visitor behaviors and perceptions. The role that educational exposure in these places plays in shaping positive visitor behaviors, which are geared towards responsible tourism, repeat visits, as well as destinations, is considerable. In view of the importance that destinations are placing on authenticity, the role that these places play in shaping destination image is imperative. Although museums are increasingly being viewed as educational and tourism-focused establishments, the application of empirical research methodologies to study the educational role of museums in a tourism setting remains scarce, and more specifically, a quantitative approach has not been largely adopted. In light of the literature, prevailing views seem to be concentrated on a descriptive and conceptual analysis, thus creating a void in developing a more informed understanding through empirical evidence related to the educational role of museums and related educational outcomes. This fills a void for policymakers, administrators, and tourism development professionals.

In this regard, the current study aims to explore the role, emphasis, and influence of museums as learning centers for tourism education using a mixed-methods approach. By leveraging both quantitative survey approaches with tourism visitors and qualitative views from museum experts, the current study aims to offer a holistic evaluation concerning the implications of educational experiences in



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museums towards influencing the knowledge and behavior of tourists. This study is also expected to add value to existing bodies of knowledge on tourism education and heritage studies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research is based on Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) (Kolb, 1984) and Constructivist Learning Theory. These theories work well together as a strong theoretic foundation for museology as a learning platform within tourism. Experiential Learning Theory focuses on learning as a process that creates knowledge through the transformation of experience. Museums provide concrete experiences through exhibitions and artifacts and align with the process of experiential learning.

Constructivist theory, on the other hand, proposes that individuals are active constructors of their experiences, and knowledge is built from previous experiences. In the museum setting, visitors make sense of cultural stories from a variety of individual and cultural perspectives. This process of understanding is a highly individualized yet mediated experience. Applying these theories to tourism education, for instance, these theories explain that museum-based educational experiences can impact cognitive outcomes, awareness, and behavioral intentions of museum visitors.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this research is to empirically investigate the role, significance, and educational might of museums as hubs for education for tourists. The research objectives are to:

1. Analyze museum-based learning experiences and their subsequent outcomes related to knowledge acquisition about tourism and cultural understanding.
2. Evaluate the correlation between museum learning experiences and visitor satisfaction.
3. Examine the role of museum education and the effect of that role on the tourists' intentions to behave. The intentions to behave include
4. Investigate museum professionals' perspectives regarding museums as educational platforms in the context of the tourism industry.
5. Propose an evidence-based framework for incorporating museums into tourism education as well as sustainable tourism planning.

### **Hypotheses**

On the basis of the objectives and theoretical framework, the following research questions (RQs) and hypotheses (Hs) are answered in this work:



RQ1: To what extent do educational experiences in museums affect tourists' knowledge and awareness of cultures?

RQ2: What is the association between museum educational experiences and visitor satisfaction?

RQ3: What is the influence of learning outcomes of museum visits on the tourists' intentions concerning destination behaviour?

Based on these research questions, the following hypotheses can be formed:

- H1: Museum-based educational experiences positively affect the tourism knowledge of the intended audience.
- H2: There is an important positive influence of museum-based educational experiences on visitors' cultural understanding.
- H3: Visitors' tourism knowledge and cultural awareness positively influence visitor satisfaction.
- H4: Visitor satisfaction has a positive impact on tourists' behavior intention (revisit and recommend intention).

### **Methodology: Research Design**

This research proposes the application of a mixed-methodology approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in order to gain a well-rounded perspective on the role of museums as tourist education centers. A sequential explanation design research approach was adopted, where the initial mode of research is quantitative.

Data Collection for Quantitative Data

### **Sample**

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire survey on 312 museum visitors. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale that evaluated museum learning experiences, tourism knowledge levels, cultural knowledge, visitor satisfaction, and intentions. Using a convenience sampling method is not uncommon and aligns with previous tourism and museum studies.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis:**

An analysis of quantitative data was carried out using SPSS and AMOS. Descriptive analysis was used to describe or summarize the study participants. Multiple regression analysis was used to explore the direct paths between museum educational experiences and learning. Later, SEM analysis was used to validate a conceptual model. With this analysis, it became feasible to explore both direct and indirect



associations between constructs. Generally, model fit was checked using standard criteria such as CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and  $\chi^2/df$ .

### **Qualitative data:**

The data collected is qualitative in nature. This is because it is collected through conducting semi-structured interviews on 15 museum professionals. Additionally, it is focused on measuring perceptions on educational roles and challenges within museums as well as contributions to tourism development. The data is also used to triangulate results from quantitative data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participation was on a voluntary basis, with informed consent provided by each of the respondents. The data collection guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, and all data were used for academic research purposes only

### **Conceptual Model Description**

A conceptual framework developed for the research captures the following structural relationships among the museum-based educational experiences, outcomes of visitors' learning, levels of visitors' satisfaction, and tourism behavior intentions. Based on the Experiential Learning Theory and the Constructivist Learning Theory, the conceptual framework identifies the museum-based educational experiences as an exogenous variable whose values can cause changes in several endogenous variables. In the context of the research, the museum-based educational experiences, designed through the use of interaction exhibits, explanatory information, and educational programs, are predicted to generate changes in tourism knowledge and cultural awareness of visitors.

Tourism knowledge and cultural awareness act as mediating variables which direct learning experiences towards affective and behavioral outcomes. Learning outcomes are hypothesized to affect visitors' satisfaction, which is considered a crucial predictor for behavioral outcomes, specifically for intent to return and for recommending the destination to others as a behavioral intent. In this model, the relationship between learning and behavior is represented through a learning-satisfaction-behavior sequence.

### **Results and SEM Model Interpretation**

#### **Measurement Model**

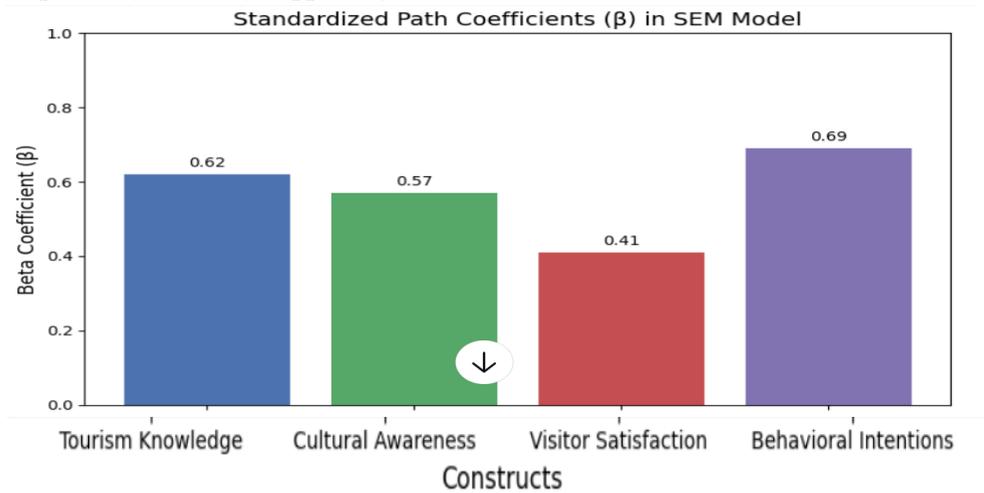
First was the assessment of the measurement model to check construct validity and reliability. Confirmatory Factor Analysis yielded acceptable values of the factor loadings of the research variables above the threshold of 0.60. Composite reliability



ranged from 0.78 to 0.91, while the average variance extracted was above 0.50 for all variables. This confirmed construct validity. Discriminant validity was confirmed as the square roots of the average variance extracted for all the constructs were above the correlations between the constructs.

**Structural Model**

The structural model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data ( $\chi^2/df = 2.31$ ; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.058), indicating that the proposed model adequately represents the observed relationships. Path analysis revealed that museum-based educational experiences had a significant positive effect on tourism knowledge ( $\beta = 0.62, p < 0.001$ ) and cultural awareness ( $\beta = 0.57, p < 0.001$ ), supporting H1 and H2. Tourism knowledge and cultural awareness were found to significantly influence visitor satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$ , respectively), thereby supporting H3.



Visitor satisfaction showed a strong positive effect on behavioral intentions ( $\beta = 0.69, p < 0.001$ ), confirming H4. Mediation analysis further indicated that tourism knowledge, cultural awareness, and visitor satisfaction jointly mediated the relationship between museum educational experiences and behavioral intentions. These findings highlight the central role of learning outcomes and satisfaction in translating educational encounters into positive tourism behaviors.

**Discussion**

The evidence generated by this research serves to inform and verify the significant role of museums as influential learning hubs in tourism. Supporting the principles of Experiential Learning Theory, this evidence has identified and



authenticated the fact that effective learning experiences play a significant role and greatly improve one's knowledge of tourism by providing awareness and insights into the different cultures related to tourism.

The close link that exists between learning outcomes and visitor satisfaction confirms the educational lessons offered by museums in creating a positive visitor experience. Visitors who gain more cultural knowledge are likely to express greater satisfaction levels, which in turn affect the intention to revisit and promote the destination. This supports lessons from the tourist literature that highlight the main role that satisfaction plays in serving as a mediator in the experience-behavior intention relationship.

Moreover, the findings from the SEM analyses indicate that the education role of museums not only pertains to the dissemination of knowledge, impacts tourism behaviors, but is also related to destination loyalty. By considering education, tourism satisfaction, and tourism behavioral intention simultaneously in the structural model, the paper contributes to the existing body of literature on the education role of museums in tourism.

## **Implications**

### **Theoretical Implications**

The contribution of this study to existing literature in the tourism and education sectors is the integration of Experiential Learning Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory in the context of museum tourism. The conceptual model that has been developed and verified in the study can add to existing theories by showing that the process of informal learning plays an important role in the relation between cultural institutions and tourist behavior, thus locating museums in the middle of the tourism education process rather than on the outskirts.

### **Practical Implications**

For the administrators of museums, the implications of the study underscore the need to invest in interaction and learning strategies in museums to contribute to visitor learning and satisfaction. Tourism policymakers and planners can utilize museums for strategic destination branding, cultural learning, and the sustainable development of tourism destinations through the provision of museums that can contribute to visitor engagement and loyalty to destinations.

### **Policy Implications**

In terms of policy, this study advocates for the integration of museums in national or regional programs for tourism education and sustainability. It is believed that certain policies which promote coordination between museums, learning



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institutions, and tourism agencies can help ensure that museums bring maximum socio-cultural and economic advantages while maintaining cultural resources for sustainable tourism practices.

### **Conclusion**

In this research, the authors aimed to investigate the role, importance, and educational powers of museums as a location for tourism education within a theoretically underpinned, empirical framework. Based on Experiential Learning Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory, this research aims to prove that tourism education, which is conducted within museums, greatly improves the tourism knowledge and awareness of visitors, which ultimately leads to a higher level of visitor satisfaction in a tourist destination. In this paper, a mixed-method approach is used in a framework described by Structural Equation Modeling.

The results underscore the importance of the fact that museums are more than just cultural institutions; they are also strategic education institutions that have the capability to impact the perspectives, behaviors, and performances of their visitors. The proposed conceptual framework for testing the objectives through the validation process contributes towards the advancement of relevant literature by providing a holistic perspective related to the impact that education in the museums has on the field of tourism.

### **Limitations**

Despite its contributions, there are also some limitations that have to be assumed for the present study. First, quantitative data were collected through a convenience sampling technique from a small number of museums, and this will set limits on generalizing these findings to other cultural or geographical contexts. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the extent to which causal inferences about changes in visitor learning and behavior can be made. Third, the responses of visitors were based on self-report measures, and such measures are therefore open to potential biases in terms of social desirability or recall. While SEM offered a rigorous examination of structural relationships, not all contextual variables, such as prior experience with a museum or some cultural background, were modeled explicitly.

### **Future Research Directions**

The future studies could be focused on the use of longitudinal research methodology to understand the impact of educational experiences at the museum on visitor learning and behavior. The studies could also be differentiated by including a larger sample from diverse regions, types of museums, and cultural backgrounds to



boost the external validity of the results. In the future studies, the role of moderating variables such as the visitor's age, education, or cultural orientation could be investigated to gain in-depth knowledge. Also, in the future studies, the impact of virtual museums on the education of tourists in the wake of technological innovability and the pandemic could be explored.

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