

Self-Congruity of Visitor in Heritage Hotels

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Heritage hotels attract a large number of foreign and domestic tourists by offering luxurious experiences while also providing an opportunity to learn about the history, art, culture, tastes, traditions, and sentiments present in various eras in a region's history. Self-congruity greatly influences the visitor's emotional experiences; the concept of visitors' self-congruity should find more attention in heritage tourism. Furthermore, using digital technologies can probably improve the overall tourism experience.

involvement

and nostalgia

heritage hotels

digital technology

self-congruity

1. Introduction

Retro style has become popular in different disciplines and industries, including the hotel, vintage train, and restaurant industries providing an unforgettable dining experience ^[1]. Therefore, many countries have taken the initiative to use their unique heritage and cultural resources to increase their place-based competitive advantage. Egypt was one of the first countries to advocate for the preservation of world heritage sites and a need for a system to protect this heritage in all countries worldwide ^[2]. Egypt has made great efforts to sustain some heritage buildings by adapting and reusing them as heritages hotels. Historic buildings that have been renovated or remodelled are among the most popular tourist accommodations and are increasingly being placed on the heritage tourism map ^[3].

According to the cognitive appraisal theory (CAT), emotions are significant drivers of heritage tourism experiences ^[4]. To better manage heritage tourism, it is critical to consider motivation factors and emotions (i.e., nostalgia, authenticity, and involvement) and their impact on subsequent behavioural intentions and visitor experience ^[4]. Researchers have affirmed the positive influences of nostalgia on heritage tourism. It is an influential motivator and leads to a boost in the marketing capacity of heritage tourism ^[5]. Both perceived authenticity and visitor involvement are essential variables that provoke and stimulate nostalgia ^[6]. Self-congruity greatly influences the visitor's emotional experiences; the concept of visitors' self-congruity should find more attention in heritage tourism ^[5]. Furthermore, using digital technologies can probably improve the overall tourism experience.

2. Self-Congruity of Visitor in Heritage Hotels

2.1. Heritage Hotel

“Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations”, heritage tourism is defined as travel with the primary goal of learning about a location’s culture and heritage [7]. With the great growth in tourists wishing to experience heritage tourism, heritage is defined as a “contemporary epidemic” [5]. Tourists of heritage tourism seek worthy experiences and a relationship with the precedent history or memories [1]. They desire to participate in a personal “historical heritage experience,” remember more about the history of the place, join in a recreational experience, become in touch with their heritage; they desire to live with the same local customs, art, traditions, and cultures of the heritage destination [6]. In today’s hospitality industry, heritage hotels have become widespread places of accommodation [8]. According to [9], heritage hotels have advanced with higher and more stable occupancy and drawn much attention from people with higher incomes and higher literacy levels. They attract many foreign and domestic tourists by providing an opportunity for partaking in luxurious experiences, while also learning about various aspects of a region’s history, especially those which are embodied in UNESCO “World Heritage Sites” [3]. According to [10], approximately 85 percent of the general population is estimated to be current or potential heritage tourists. Heritage hotels provide these tourists with emotional, aesthetic, personal, and symbolic value. In addition, they experience the pride of visiting a historical site and culture, more so than when visiting a commercial hotel [11]. Heritage hotels provide heritage experiences and lodging simultaneously.

Adaptive reuse of historical buildings is increasingly being endorsed as a practical approach to revitalizing historic districts in cities: it allows for conservation while also providing various social, economic, and environmental benefits [12]. This effort can help extend the life of buildings, reduce demolition waste, repurpose embodied energy, and provide economic and social benefits to local communities [13]. Many heritage hotels were ancient palaces, forts, mansions, factories, stores, castles, convents, post offices, churches, or even prisons. This may be why they appeal to history or heritage buffs and have become essential venues for introducing the cultural and historical background of the past to modern society [14]. Heritage character, hotels’ historical attributes, experience quality, prior knowledge, and perceived authenticity are the factors which positively affect tourists’ intention to visit heritage hotels [15][16]; The adaptive reuse of historic buildings as heritage hotels ultimately assists in the growth of the country’s tourism sector [17]. In Bangkok, the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings as small hotels achieved numerous benefits towards the preservation of heritage buildings’ value and offered economic and social benefits to the local community [18].

2.2. Self-Congruity as a Mediator in the Relationship between the Perceived Authenticity of Heritage Hotels and Heritage Hotel Visitor Involvement and Heritage Hotel Visitor Nostalgia

It is critical to know what kinds of heritage attractions can meet the demands for cultural consumption. Consumers of heritage accommodation should feel depth, authenticity, and involvement with this type of accommodation, all of which support their self-congruity in order to bring them to a state of nostalgia [19][20].

In 1688, Hofer coined the concept “nostalgia” to describe Swiss soldiers who were extraordinarily homesick and longing for home [21]. Nostalgia is no longer used to describe homesickness; it is used to describe individuals attempting to discover their past [22]. The concept of nostalgia, in recent years, has become more attuned to its

uses and applications. Amidst the tremendous developments of today, there is an urgent need to feel a positive emotion toward the past because of an unfulfilling present [23][24]. Because of this contrast between a positive past and a negative present, nostalgia is widely applied in the marketing and promoting of places and products [23]. Two classifications of nostalgia have been determined. (1) Historical nostalgia arises from collective memories and expresses a desire to escape contemporary life by returning to a time in the distant past regarded as superior to the present, and (2) on the other hand, personal nostalgia arises from personal memories idealizing the personally remembered past [1][25]. In the tourism industry over the last three decades, an increasing number of people worldwide have expressed a desire to visit less complex, less volatile, and less technologically advanced environments. As a result, nostalgia products, destinations, and advertising messages are rising, such as museums, heritage hotels, historical architecture, and rural areas [26]. There is a general agreement that there is a positive relationship between ad-evoked nostalgia and attitudes toward the advertisement, brand, and purchase intention [25]. According to the push–pull theory, nostalgia can be considered an inner heritage tourism motivation [27]. The push–pull factors of tourism incentives are significant in evaluating tourist behaviour [11]. The pull factor is exemplified by the travel decisions and stimuli generated by the attractive features of a tourist location, while the push factors are a socio-psychological necessity and an invisible strength that boosts visitors to travel [7]. In the context of heritage hotels, the pull factors are, for example, heritage architecture, food service, and historic streets, while examples of push factors are visitor engagement, learning, and a sense of belonging [11].

The concept of authenticity is generally recognized as the theoretical starting point for any endeavour in the context of heritage hotels. The majority of academics have recognized the importance of authenticity in framing the activities of heritage hotels by viewing this concept as a fundamental cornerstone of operations [20]. Ref. MacCannell [28] introduced the concept of authenticity to tourism studies in order to analyse the tourist experience at historical sites. Authenticity has since gained prominence in tourism research, particularly in research concerning heritage tourism [29]. There are many subcategories of authenticity, but according to [24], constructive authenticity, which has usually been termed “perceived authenticity” and relates to how individuals perceive a tourism object to be authentic, is closely associated with heritage hotels. Feelings of alienation from modern life contribute to the appeal of heritage tourist sites marketed as “authentic” [19]. Authenticity is continually associated with a feeling of nostalgia, as individuals yearn for things from “the past” in the context of rapid urbanization and modernization [6].

Visitor involvement is defined as the degree to which customers participate in various aspects of the consumption procedures, including the product, advertising, information search, information processing, purchase decision making, and the purchasing act [30]. Therefore, according to the self-determination theory, which explains travellers' sources of motivation, involvement in an activity can be viewed as a predictor of customer behaviour and is considered a motivational variable, reflecting the extent of the personal relevance of the decision to the person in terms of their essential objectives, values, and self-concept [31]. In the heritage hotels context, the concept of involvement urges the individual's physical, mental, emotional, social, or spiritual engagement to activate the nostalgic experience [24]. Based on self-determination theory, a higher degree of involvement in and awareness of a heritage destination leads to a higher level of self-congruity and nostalgia; thus, a higher level of memorable tourism and hospitality is experienced [32].

Heritage tourism and hospitality entail using a destination's personality to build its brand, understanding visitors' perceptions of that destination and creating its distinct identity [33]. Thus, a niche marketing strategy can be used for this segment. In line with this, many studies have confirmed the relevance of self-congruity theory and the need to expand its application to the tourism sphere.

Self-congruity has been defined as "the combination or degree of alignment between the image of the product/brand and the self-concept of the consumer" [34]. According to the self-congruity theory, individuals have a variety of thoughts about themselves and act accordingly to strengthen their self-image. As a result, individuals are more likely to purchase products or services compatible with their original self-concept [35].

According to [36], self-congruity is a valid theory within the context of tourism. By relying on it, it is possible to relate self-congruity to pre-travel factors, such as visit motivation and destination selection [37], and post-purchase variables such as satisfaction, revisit intention, and recommendation intention [37]. Ref. Roy and Rabbanee [38] argued that antecedent variables such as social desirability (involvement), the need for uniqueness, and status consumption (authenticity) influence consumers' self-congruity with a brand. Ref. Zhou et al. [5] state that self-congruity greatly influences the emotional experience (nostalgia) produced in a specific purchasing situation. Ref. Liu et al. [39] confirmed that the destination image significantly influences self-congruity. Therefore, it can argue that tourist self-congruity explains the relationship between perceived authenticity and perceived visitor involvement and nostalgia in the context of heritage hotels.

2.3. Digital Technology as a Moderator in the Relationship between Visitor Self-Congruity and Heritage Hotel Visitor Nostalgia

Digital technology is used in the cultural tourism field to enhance the visitor experience and engagement [40]. AR, VR, and holographic technologies have been successfully implemented in several subsectors of the tourism business [41]. AR allows for digital signage and content at cultural heritage sites without compromising the original architecture or landscape [42]. Utilizing VR and AR in heritage tourism can help control conflicting memories by recreating historical customs and myths [43]. The Technology Acceptance Model TAM has long been the most famous theoretical framework for researching new technology adoption. The TAM has shown that perceived ease of use and usefulness, the two cognitive beliefs that support the model, are strong antecedents of adoption. On the other hand, recent works have criticized the TAM for its lack of emotions and/or affective beliefs (Antón et al., 2013). The term nostalgia tends to be emotional to a large extent. In this vein, it can argue that digital technology may moderate the relationship between self-congruity and nostalgia.

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