



Heritage Tourism in Cancun: Fostering Tourist Connection and Destination Resilience through Cultural Experiences.

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Abstract

Background: This research explores destination resilience in Cancún, México, which is known for its relaxed Caribbean atmosphere and sandy beaches worldwide and uses heritage experiences such as tours to archaeological sites and culinary tastings to weave a destination narrative. **Objectives & Method:** Utilizing heritage tourism theory to provide a lens for understanding how global tourism leaders strengthen their destination's resilience, the study was conducted using observational research to investigate cultural tourist experiences at Museo Maya de Cancún and Coba and in Cancún's hotel zone. **Results/Conclusion:** This poster examines the role heritage tourism plays in helping to create connection between the region's Mayan culture with its tourists, leading to a stronger destination image for Cancún's resort community.

Keywords: Resilience, Cancún, México, Global Tourism, Observation, culture, heritage tourism, destination image, community

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Heritage Tourism in Cancun: Fostering Tourist Connection and Destination Resilience through Cultural Experiences

Abstract: This research explores destination resilience in Cancún, México, which is known for its relaxed Caribbean atmosphere and sandy beaches worldwide and uses heritage experiences such as tours to archaeological sites and culinary tastings to weave a destination narrative. Utilizing heritage tourism theory to provide a lens for understanding how global tourism leaders strengthen their destination's resilience, the study was conducted using observational research to investigate cultural tourist experiences at Museo Maya de Cancún and Coba and in Cancún's hotel zone. This poster examines the role heritage tourism plays in helping to create connection between the region's Mayan culture with its tourists leading to a stronger destination image for Cancún's resort community.

Introduction

Global travel destinations such as Cancún, México offer tourists an escape to tropical beach destinations. These destinations also offer opportunities to experience local culture, enhancing the destination's ability to be resilient through establishing connections between tourists and the rich history of the region (Shang et al., 2022). Cancún, México, located on the Caribbean Sea, is a world destination that attracts millions of tourists each year. The city's rich history is reflected in its cultural resources on the coast and in the heart of the city. The Museo Maya de Cancún, the Museo Maya de Quintana Roo, and the Museo Maya de Yucatán are key cultural institutions in the region. The Museo Maya de Cancún, located in the heart of the city, is a museum that showcases the history and culture of the Maya people. The Museo Maya de Quintana Roo, located in the heart of the state, is a museum that showcases the history and culture of the Maya people. The Museo Maya de Yucatán, located in the heart of the state, is a museum that showcases the history and culture of the Maya people.

Methodology

Observational research conducted at Coba, Museo Maya, and Cancún's hotel zone revealed significant insights into cultural tourism experiences. Data were collected through direct participant observation using field notes collected in natural settings during a one-week period in November 2023 (Lofgren et al., 2022). Tourist experiences were observed at three locations: JW Marriott Cancún Resort and Spa, Museo Maya de Cancún, and Museo Maya de Quintana Roo. The data were analyzed using a framework informed by cultural heritage theory, the motivation factors, educational, and recreational. Observational methods have the potential to reveal aspects of depth and an authentic understanding of the setting and the participants (Lofgren et al., 2022). As the research was also a tourist acting as a direct participant, observer bias is a potential limitation of the study.

Theory

Cultural heritage theory is based on the idea that culture is not just a collection of artifacts but a living, breathing entity that evolves over time. It is a dynamic process that involves the transmission of knowledge, values, and traditions from one generation to the next. In the context of heritage tourism, this theory suggests that tourists are not just passive observers but active participants in the cultural experience. They are seeking to understand the past and its relevance to the present, and they are looking for ways to connect with the culture on a personal level.

Results

The study found that the integrated integration of cultural heritage theory and destination resilience theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the two. The study also found that the integrated integration of cultural heritage theory and destination resilience theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the two. The study also found that the integrated integration of cultural heritage theory and destination resilience theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the two.

Learning Experiences - Museo Maya

The Museo Maya is a small museum in the Cancún hotel zone. The collection contains pottery, art, carved stone, and jewelry from a number of sites including Chichén Itzá, Tulum, Coba, and Yucatán. The museum grounds contain the ruins of the Chichén Itzá, which is a large pyramid complex. The ruins are surrounded by lush tropical vegetation, and the museum grounds are well-maintained. The museum is a popular destination for tourists, and it provides a unique opportunity to learn about the history and culture of the Maya people.

Fun Cultural Experiences - Hotel Zone

Residents in the Cancún hotel zone offer tourists an opportunity to participate in local culture through various activities. These activities include traditional music performances, dance performances, and cultural workshops. These activities provide tourists with a unique opportunity to experience the local culture and to learn about the history and traditions of the region.

Emotional Experiences - Coba Site

Coba is an archaeological site of the former Mayan city that provides a look at what life was like in the city. The site is a large pyramid complex, and it is surrounded by lush tropical vegetation. The site is a popular destination for tourists, and it provides a unique opportunity to learn about the history and culture of the Maya people.

Conclusion

As a true destination, Cancún offers unique experiences that are not found elsewhere. The city's rich history and culture are reflected in its architecture, its art, and its traditions. The city is a vibrant and exciting place to visit, and it provides a unique opportunity to learn about the history and culture of the Maya people.

Keywords: Heritage tourism theory, destination resilience, integrated tourism, Cancún, observational research, tourism

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ences - Hotel Zone

ffer tourists an opportunity to participate in also making which can add to the richness of the JW Marriott Cancún Resort and Spa utilized nce tourist experiences through cultivating in traditional dishes and cocktails for guests. experiences occurred during the study when m and traditional songs during a celebration to season. These types of activities are examples connection for their guests through cultural eople and their heritage in a way that invites Cancún beyond its beach and resort activities.

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About the author



Karen Dyer, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Terre Haute Convention and Visitors Bureau, a role she has held since 2024. With over 28 years of leadership experience, she drives tourism growth through strategic marketing, regional partnerships, and innovation through collaboration. Karen earned her Ph.D. in Global Leadership in 2025 from Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College. Her research focused on resilience and adaptability in the global tourism industry. Dyer has expertise in leadership development, marketing, and strategic planning, informed by a decade of service as the Executive Vice President of Advancement and Strategic Initiatives at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

GLI classification: (75)

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