

Heritage Tourism and music. The case of Opera Houses through qualitative research

The study of heritage tourism spans across different dimensions of lifestyle patterns among tourists and the approaches that can be adopted to better understand them. This study presents the case of an ethnographic enquiry into the Opera House tourist's background which results on travel patterns, behaviours and choice of destination. These allow them to actively engage with their interest in Opera and Ballet productions across a variety of cultural landscapes that cater towards this niche tourism market which this project has focused on. To this end, an online exploration of the reasons why individuals develop this type of personal musical heritage was undertaken through qualitative written questionnaires that allowed respondents to reflect on their answers in their own timeframes resulting in rich written narratives. 226 musical tourists engaged with this study that aimed to identify how a tourist develops an interest in these type of art forms, inevitably exploring the arts consumption environments where they typically take place. In this sense, the role of Opera Houses and Grand Theatres were explored in line with this niche tourism market's perception and experience of the destinations they visit. The findings were robust as respondents made strong references to venues such as the Royal Opera House in London and the Vienna State Opera, evidencing the strong impact that they can hold on a tourist's perceived destination image and their experience of them. The study also yielded rich insights into personal heritage development and its connection to engagement with specific art forms in a tourism context. Robust themes emerged from this line of qualitative enquiry. These evidenced that: family references and influences, an individual's age, their level of education, their income levels, further reference groups and their place of origin all play salient and central roles in their cultural consumption patterns. These themes combined have proven to result in personal heritage that leads to consumption of cultural products such as ballet and opera performances. This type of consumer behaviour further cements the cultural tourist's personal heritage as they continue engaging with the art forms. In turn, this yields a deeper and further exploration of them that often results in travelling patterns as tourists wish to continue engaging with this kind of culture at a variety of settings. Hence, the concept of Opera House tourism has been approached holistically and this study sheds light on why people travel to visit Opera Houses and shares insights into some notable destinations that are especially attractive to this end.