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Cultural Heritage Tourism through the Lens of Well-Being: Shaping Tourist Intentions in Heritage Destinations

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Abstract

This study explores the growing field of cultural heritage tourism by examining how multiple dimensions of well-being—hedonic, eudaimonic, physical, and social—shape tourists' behavioral intentions, particularly their intention to visit and willingness to pay a premium. Using a theoretical model, the research analyzes how thesewell-being factors influence perceptions of heritage destinations and tourists' decision-making. The findings demonstrate that all four dimensions of well-being significantly affect travel intentions and premium-paying behavior, highlighting their critical role in determining visitor behavior. By jointly examining intention to visit and willingness to pay a premium—antecedents rarely studied together in this context—the study offers a novel contribution aligned with the global emphasis on meaningful and experience-based heritage tourism. The results suggest that destination marketers should design heritage experiences that deliver pleasure, purpose, comfort, and social connection, thereby enhancing visitor satisfaction, increasing visitation, encouraging higher spending, and fostering long-term loyalty.

Keywords: Behavioral intention, Eudaimonic well-being, Hedonic well-being, Social well-being, Heritage tourism

1.Introduction

Heritage Tourism Destinations (HTDs) are places where visitors can enjoy a variety of cultural experiences in a setting where cultural heritage is the leading resource (Su & Wall, 2012; Wang et al., 2024). At HTDs, maintaining cultural legacy is essential to sustaining human civilization and prosperity as well as attaining cultural diversity (Yu & Xu, 2019; Wang et al., 2024). Heritage tourism offers a favorable chance for local development to preserve and protect significant cultural assets by utilizing heritage sites for financial purposes (Cerisola & Panzera, 2024). It also gives a chance to introduce visitors to a nation and strengthen their comprehension of its history and culture (Noor et al., 2019; Phang & Kong, 2024). In recent years, cultural tourism has grown significantly (Seraphin et al., 2018; Arumugam et al., 2023). Since they offer

tourists the chance to engage in historical and cultural activities that enhance their awareness of, respect for, and comprehension of a country's historical and contemporary past, apart from creating jobs and attracting local and foreign visitors, these monuments can stimulate economic activity and promote pride and national identity within the country (Arumugam et al., 2023).

Heritage tourism involves traveling to historical sites, places where significant events occurred, and destinations that showcase distinctive and meaningful cultures (Osiako et al.,2024). Travelers can learn about a nation's past and the distinctive cultural practices of its communities by visiting these sites (Phang & Kong, 2024). Cultural Heritage (CH) is cherished as an essential community asset and is often a primary attraction for tourism industries, driving economic and cultural engagement (Ashworth, 2009; Hughes & Carlsen, 2010). It is classified into two main categories: tangible and intangible resources. Tangible heritage refers to physical objects created, preserved, and handed down through generations within a society. These can include items such as traditional clothing, tools, modes of transportation, buildings, monuments, and artworks. In contrast, intangible heritage encompasses non-physical aspects of culture, representing a community's intellectual and spiritual wealth. It includes oral traditions, music, dance, performing arts, local knowledge, craftsmanship, and language. Both tangible and intangible heritage play crucial roles in maintaining cultural identity and continuity (Reshma et al., 2023). Experiential learning at the site enriches the learning process and impacts visitors (Henderson & Atencio, 2007; Song et al., 2024).

CH is a fundamental component of civilization and national identity. It is constantly aging and gradually deteriorating. Therefore, innovative preservation techniques are needed based on the most recent scientific discoveries. In order to protect cultural diversity, foster a sense of patriotism, and lessen the detrimental impacts of modernization, cultural heritage tourism is essential (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009; Wu et al., 2023). CH storytelling emphasizes conveying knowledge about historical events, cultural values, and the social context of the presented heritage. It enables visitors to connect with and experience a piece of the past, forming a connection to a particular place and era. Additionally, the story must be shared engagingly and entertainingly to maintain the audience's interest (Dennis & Sampaio-Dias, 2021; Mandal, Gunasekar, Dixit, & Das, 2022; Leong et al., 2024). Humanity's collective duty is to protect and preserve cultural assets of great value and significance (Omay & Can, 2008; Külekçi et al., 2023). Considering the benefits they bring to numerous nations, heritage resources must be protected and maintained. These resources are not just artifacts for exhibition but crucial symbols of identity and vital contributors to the economic development of a region (Tadesse, 2022).

In conclusion, this study incorporates well-being as a key factor in investigating what drives tourists' intentions to travel in the context of cultural heritage tourism. By addressing existing research gaps, the study examines how well-being influences tourists' behavioral intentions to engage in cultural heritage tourism. It also provides practical insights for tourism managers and

marketers to enhance the involvement of younger generations in cultural heritage activities. The research findings guide advancing cultural heritage tourism at the World Heritage Site. Stakeholders can use these insights to prioritize preserving cultural values, enhance infrastructure, adopt effective pricing strategies, and implement sustainable development practices. By emphasizing cultural authenticity, improving visitor facilities, introducing targeted pricing models, investing in training for staff, encouraging active community participation, and shaping informed policy decisions, tourism managers, policymakers, and local communities can collaborate to ensure the site's long-term sustainability and vibrancy. This approach will ultimately offer visitors enriching and responsible experiences while safeguarding the heritage for future generations (Luekveerawattana, 2024).

2.Review of Literature

2.1 Well-being

2.1.1 Hedonic Well-being

Hedonic well-being focuses on happiness, contentment, pleasure, or enjoyment (Kahneman et al., 1999; Liang et al., 2024). It was first proposed by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristippus and was subsequently supported by Bentham and Mill's utilitarian beliefs. Furthermore, it is frequently assessed in psychological research using the subjective well-being lens (Busseri & Sadava, 2013; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon et al., 2019), which combines life satisfaction, means cognitive assessment of one's quality of life, the maximization of positive affect, which is the appearance of positive feelings and emotions and the minimization of negative affect, which is the absence of negative feelings and emotions (Diener, 2009; Liang et al., 2024). Providing a healing experience that permits mental rest and recharge, supports hedonic well-being, and is consistent with the hedonic goal of maximizing pleasure (Kaplan, Bardwell, and Slakter, 1993; Packer, 2008; Packer & Bond, 2010; Dragija et al., 2024). Rather than being a permanent way of life, happiness is frequently seen in modern discourse as a fleeting emotional state. Hedonic well-being is generally defined as a positive effect and is concerned with fleeting pleasures and sensations of enjoyment.

2.1.2 Eudaimonic Well-being

The idea of eudaimonia comes from Aristotle, who believed that the ultimate purpose of life was to realize one's potential and grow personally. Additionally, eudaimonia is the part of well-being that has to do with meaning, namely the degree to which a person is successful and completely formed (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Su et al., 2020). A person who experiences eudaimonia has more autonomy, control over their environment, personal growth, meaningful interactions with others, a feeling of purpose, and self-acceptance (Su et al., 2020; Ryff, 2014). Nonetheless, people discover a feeling of purpose by carrying on with their lives despite cognitively taxing situations. This sense of purpose may be more comparable to

eudaimonic well-being (Kumano, 2018). In cultural heritage tourism, eudaimonic well-being refers to discovering meaning and developing oneself by encountering and relating to many cultures and customs. By experiencing important cultural traditions and knowing about history, people feel more fulfilled a stronger, longer-lasting sense of fulfillment or living by one's values and self.

2.1.3Physical Well-being

Tourism locations, such as yoga retreats, nature retreats, hot springs, and cycling vacations, have long attracted tourists because they offer health-focused options and treatments for rejuvenating the body and mind while also providing the chance to enjoy a healthy lifestyle (Ali-Knight, 2009; Sthapit et al., 2022). A high level of behavioral intention among tourists indicates that they are more likely to recommend the experience to others, are more satisfied with the goods or services provided, and favor health and wellness tourism destinations (Backman et al., 2022; Sthapit et al., 2022). Furthermore, health, motivation, perception of danger, and general contentment are some of the characteristics that influence tourists' behavioral intentions (Gan et al., 2023). In addition to offering pleasurable and rewarding experiences that enhance basic personal well-being, these wellness holidays also assist in reducing stress levels and encouraging a healthy balance between the body, mind, and spirit. Similarly, cultural heritage tourism enhances physical well-being by promoting active exploration of historical sites, walking tours, and outdoor activities. Through physical activity and a connection to local customs and surroundings, immersing oneself in various cultural landscapes promotes vitality.

2.1.4 Social Well-being

The term "social well-being" refers to social conditions that promote self-actualization. When these criteria are satisfied, people are more likely to demonstrate a strong ability for resilience. It is considered an appraisal of one's state and function in society, with various societal elements influencing its definition (Kimbu et al., 2023). Additionally, it plays a crucial role in connecting the effects of events with the support from residents. It is widely seen as a positive mental health state that reflects individuals' assessments of their lives within social institutions and cultural circumstances. Social well-being, which is typically seen as a latent variable, is measured in five essential dimensions: social coherence, social integration, social actualization, social contribution, and social acceptability. These factors assist in determining how individuals perceive their lives about the larger social structure (Sato et al., 2024). Social well-being is improved by cultural heritage tourism, which unites people to share and learn from various customs. Through cultural exchanges, it creates relationships, advances understanding, and enhances connections between people.

2.2 Behavioral Intention

2.2.1 Intention to Visit

Intention to visit can be described as a person's mental state that reflects their intention to perform specific behaviors within a specified time range. In tourism marketing, the intention to visit refers to a person's interest or passion for a specific object or activity. Essentially, the intention to visit indicates tourists' eagerness to interact with the attractions provided by destination managers at various tourism destinations (Sumantri & Rahmat, 2023). Cultural heritage tourists passionate about learning about different cultures travel to cultural heritage sites as a hobby. They typically spend more money, travel more frequently, and visit far-flung places to accomplish this and acquire the knowledge they desire (Fang & Ariffin, 2021). The intention to visit significantly affects the change in intention connected to health (Pahrudin et al., 2023).

2.2.2 Willingness to Pay Premium

The willingness to pay a premium shows the tourist's willingness to spend more than the regular price (Fauzi et al., 2024). When determining costs for tourism-related goods and services like hotel rooms, flights, and excursions, willingness to pay is frequently crucial. Moreover, tourism companies can better determine prices and adjust their marketing tactics by knowing how much a visitor is willing to pay (Rita et al., 2024). Moreover, travelers are more likely to value the premium offer and be prepared to pay more for it if they have higher expectations for their trip. Therefore, controlling these expectations is crucial since it affects how the premium experience is assessed, affecting the price that can be set in certain circumstances (Hasan et al., 2024).

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on prior discussions and emphasizes two keyaspects: behavioral intention and well-being. Behavioral intention includes factors such as the intention to visit and the willingness to pay a premium. On the other hand, well-being is assessed through various dimensions: hedonic, eudaimonic, physical, and social. This study explores how tourists' behavioral intentions are influenced by their sense of well-being.

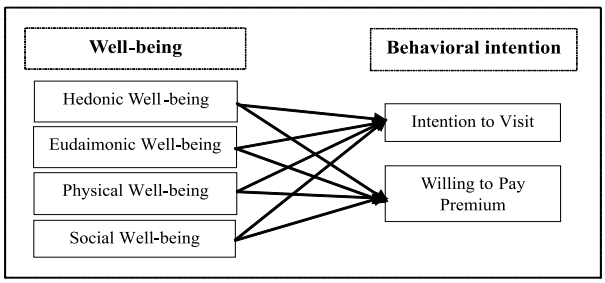


Figure I. Conceptual Framework
Source(s): Author compilations

4. Discussion

This study explores how well-being influences tourists' behavioral intentions in the context of cultural heritage. However, well-being is treated as an independent variable, consisting of four dimensions: hedonic, eudaimonic, physical, and social well-being to assess the objective. Additionally, behavioral intention is the dependent variable, measured by the intention to visit and willingness to pay a premium. Based on previous studies, the findings reveal that tourists' well-being significantly impacted their intention to return and the likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2015). According to Gan et al. (2023), travelers' motivation significantly positively affects their health and wellness tourism behavioral intentions. Similarly, Vada et al. (2019) suggested that travelers who feel hedonic well-being (or contentment with their tourism experience) are more likely to return, discuss their experiences, and promote the place to others. The tourism sector increasingly emphasizes travel's importance in promoting personal growth and self-development. However, Pearce and Packer (2013) found that, while tourists feel eudaimonic well-being during their journeys, this does not always result in a desire to return or favorable word-of-mouth. Eudaimonic well-being is promoted by activities that provide significance, deep fulfillment, learning, personal progress, and self-development. In order to provide tourists with a healthy situation that contrasts with their everyday routines, health and wellness tourism destinations should concentrate on developing a calming, pleasurable, and peaceful therapeutic environment and also ensure that travelers believe they are getting good value for their money, health and wellness tourism enterprises might concentrate on carefully controlling tourists' expenses and providing fair incentives or discounts (Dai et al., 2022; Zhong et al., 2021; Gan et al., 2023). According to Su et al. (2020), attributing the reason to the destination and social responsibility can boost travelers' trust and improve their inclination to visit a destination with a good reputation. This effect is especially noticeable when the reputation of the destination is mediocre. However, the experience of wellness tourism is not significantly impacted by perceived social worth. One reason could be that the desire for unusual and rewarding experiences, rather than the price of services and programs, primarily drives tourism (Seow et al., 2024).

5. Theoretical & Managerial Implications

The theoretical implications of this study provide a deeper understanding of how hedonic, eudaimonic, physical, and social well-being influence tourists' intentions to visit cultural heritage sites and their willingness to pay a premium for such experiences. Tourism research has traditionally focused on hedonic well-being, which centers on pleasure and immediate gratification. However, this framework expands the scope by introducing eudaimonic well-being, underscoring the importance of personal growth, meaningful experiences, and a more profound sense of fulfillment tourists can derive from engaging with cultural heritage. Moreover, the inclusion of physical well-being, focusing on comfort, health, and the quality of

the environment, and social well-being, emphasizing social connections and community, enriches the theoretical implications by highlighting that tourists are driven not only by pleasure or meaning but also by how they feel physically and socially connected. This broader approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing tourists' intention to visit and their willingness to pay a premium for high-quality cultural experiences. Furthermore, for academicians and researchers, this expanded framework provides a more comprehensive scope for understanding the multiple factors driving tourist behavior. It offers new opportunities to examine how these well-being dimensions interact with other psychological, emotional, and cultural elements, helping to explain how tourists make decisions about visiting and spending.

From a managerial viewpoint, this research offers critical insights for site managers and destination marketers seeking to optimize their heritage marketing and promotional activities by integrating advanced technology. However, destination marketing managers may understand that the influence of well-being on behavioral intention is key to developing effective marketing strategies. Likewise, emphasizing hedonic well-being allows managers to highlight the immediate enjoyment and pleasurable experiences visitors can expect at cultural heritage sites, appealing to tourists seeking relaxation and entertainment. At the same time, promoting eudaimonic well-being can attract tourists looking for meaningful and enriching experiences, positioning cultural heritage sites as places for personal growth, self-discovery, and deeper connections to culture. Additionally, attention to physical well-being, such as ensuring comfortable facilities, health-conscious services, and accessibility, can enhance overall visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. Moreover, social well-being, which promotes social interaction and community, can be fostered through group activities or local cultural engagements that strengthen visitors' connection to the destination and fellow travelers. By strategically addressing these dimensions of well-being, destination managers can increase the intention to visit and encourage tourists' willingness to pay a premium for richer, more fulfilling cultural experiences. This approach supports short-term visitor satisfaction and long-term economic sustainability for heritage tourism sites.

6. Conclusion & Future Research

The study combined existing literature from various domains into a comprehensive framework that aims to represent well-being, encompassing hedonic, eudaimonic, physical, and social dimensions, which play a pivotal role in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions, particularly in cultural heritage tourism. The model proposes that heritage tourism's well-being (hedonic, eudaimonic, physical, and social) influences behavioral intention (intention to visit, willingness to pay premium). Furthermore, hedonic well-being, driven by pleasure and enjoyment, enhances the intention to visit cultural sites. In contrast, eudaimonic well-being, which emphasizes personal growth and meaningful experiences, fosters a deeper connection to cultural heritage. Additionally, tourists who perceive cultural heritage tourism as a source of

personal and social fulfillment, physical health, and social interactions with a sense of belonging are more likely to allocate higher resources toward premium experiences. Thus, focusing on well-being can enhance tourists' experiences and support the economic viability of cultural heritage tourism. These dimensions increase the intention to visit cultural heritage sites and significantly impact the willingness to pay a premium for these experiences. Additionally, future research could empirically test the proposed conceptual framework to understand better the factors influencing tourists' intentions to visit cultural heritage sites. By exploring the relationships between well-being dimensions and behavioral intentions, future research can uncover opportunities for enhancing value and satisfaction, ultimately contributing to the sustainable growth of cultural heritage tourism.

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