

Tourists' Understanding of Heritage Sites Interpretation based on Guided Tour Experience

Azwin Aksan, Putera Afiq Sulaiman and Nur Ain

Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0442>

Received: 22 July 2025; Accepted: 28 July 2025; Published: 28 August 2025

ABSTRACT

This study explores how guided tour experiences shape tourists' understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage through the lens of heritage interpretation. Focusing on four key interpretive elements which are informational accuracy, perceived authenticity, cultural engagement, and contextual relevance, it assesses their influence on tourists' historical comprehension, emotional resonance, and cultural learning. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 216 visitors who participated in guided tours at major heritage landmarks in Melaka, including Dutch Square, the Stadthuys, Porta de Santiago, and Melaka Hill. The results reveal that perceived authenticity and contextual relevance were the strongest predictors of emotional connection and historical understanding, while informational accuracy significantly enhanced knowledge acquisition. Cultural engagement, meanwhile, played a crucial role in fostering appreciation for local traditions and intangible heritage. These findings highlight the importance of well-crafted interpretive narratives and culturally immersive experiences in enriching heritage tourism. Practically, the study offers valuable insights for heritage managers, suggesting that investment in guide training and interpretive content development can significantly enhance the educational and emotional impact of guided tours.

Keywords: Culture, heritage interpretation, knowledge acquisition, guided tours, heritage sites

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage tourism has emerged as an important component of the global tourism industry, playing a key role in preserving historical identity while contributing significantly to local economic development (Alhadad & Meparishvili, 2019; Silvestrelli, 2013). Within this context, guided heritage tours have become essential in enhancing visitor experiences by offering structured and meaningful interpretation of cultural and historical narratives (Crespi-Vallbona, 2020). These tours act as immersive storytelling platforms, enabling tourists to engage meaningfully with historic and heritage destinations. Through live explanation and narrative engagement, visitors gain a deeper understanding of local traditions and historical contexts, thus enriching their overall travel experience (Mykletun, 2013).

Effective cultural interpretation has been recognized as a key driver of visitor satisfaction, influencing emotional connection, knowledge acquisition, and the desire to revisit (Park et al., 2019; Chen & Chen, 2010). When guided tours incorporate clear, engaging, and interactive communication such as historical storytelling, participation, and cultural immersion, they elevate the tourist experience by fostering personal meaning and cultural appreciation (Bryon, 2012; Campos et al., 2018). Despite this, most existing research has focused predominantly on operational aspects of guided tours, such as guide professionalism and service quality, while less attention has been given to the interpretive content itself as a direct contributor to visitor satisfaction (Ap & Wong, 2001; Cetin & Yarkan, 2017).

This study aims to assess the level of visitor satisfaction with a particular focus on the cultural interpretation provided during guided heritage tours. Cultural interpretation plays a crucial role in shaping the overall experience of visitors, as it not only conveys historical and cultural information but also fosters a deeper

emotional and intellectual connection to the heritage site. The study emphasizes several key interpretive dimensions that contribute to this experience, including the amount and quality of knowledge gained, the degree of participatory engagement encouraged by the guide, the extent to which visitors develop an understanding and appreciation of the local culture, and the presence of nostalgic elements that resonate with personal or collective memories. These dimensions are increasingly recognized as vital components of an engaging and meaningful tour experience. Moreover, previous research has shown that such interpretive features significantly influence visitor satisfaction and are strong predictors of future behavioural intentions, such as repeat visits, positive word-of-mouth, and recommendations to others (Crespi-Vallbona, 2020; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Campbell et al., 2017). By exploring these factors in depth, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how cultural interpretation enhances the heritage tourism experience and informs best practices for tour design and delivery.

The significance of this study lies in its academic and practical contributions. Academically, it addresses a gap in tourism literature by emphasizing cultural interpretation as a critical factor in guided tour satisfaction. Practically, the findings offer insights for tour operators, heritage site managers, and cultural tourism stakeholders to design more engaging and emotionally resonant experiences. By identifying what interpretive elements matter most to visitors, the study supports the development of guided tours that not only inform but also inspire and connect tourists to heritage destinations in meaningful ways.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Heritage Interpretation and Guided Tour

The study of heritage interpretation in guided tours has gained significant attention in recent academic literature, reflecting its importance in enhancing visitor experiences and promoting sustainable tourism. Recent studies have explored various dimensions of this field, including the role of guides, the effectiveness of interpretation strategies, and the integration of technology in storytelling. Heritage interpretation is recognized as a vital tool for managing sustainable tourism, with studies identifying its effectiveness in promoting visitor engagement and satisfaction (Nowacki, 2021). The role of guides as cultural mediators is emphasized, showcasing their ability to narrate history and create memorable experiences for tourists (Stach & Zündorf, 2022).

Recent literature indicates a shift towards interactive and narrative-driven tours, moving away from traditional monologues to more engaging storytelling methods (Stach & Zündorf, 2022).

The emergence of alternative guiding styles, such as entrepreneurial and relational guides, reflects a diversification in the types of experiences offered to tourists (Stach & Zündorf, 2022). While the focus on guided tours and heritage interpretation is growing, some argue that the increasing reliance on technology may overshadow the personal touch that human guides provide, potentially diminishing the richness of the visitor experience. Studies on guided tours have existed extensively in the international scene and have been considered a classic field since the 1970s (Cohen, 1985). Guided tours allow individuals to design experiences based on participants' pace and preferences (Gross et al., 2009). Following that, tourists also have the right to choose how they wish to interact with the site (Overend, 2012). Therefore, guided tours are considered an important feature that tourists consider when visiting any destinations, particularly heritage sites.

Guided tours may come in various types. In the context of heritage sites, these tours can be led by tour guides or facilitated through visual, audio, mobile, brochure, and map-based formats. Tours led by knowledgeable local guides is a popular way for travellers to experience new destinations (Mykletun, 2013). However, effective guided tours require licensed and well-experienced tour guides (Tsegaw & Teresa, 2017; Zhang & Chow, 2004) are more effective when conducted in small groups, as this increases participation and boosts satisfaction (Shin & Yoon, 2020). Moreover, the tour guide also must ensure that the participants enjoy the entire tour.

The effectiveness of heritage guided tours is influenced by how the information is presented and the level of cultural immersion involved. Cultural relevance is a key aspect in ensuring that the tour resonates with visitors. Heath and Grierson (2003) highlight that cultural interpretation should be meaningful and relate to visitors' personal experiences. Moscardo (2008) further supports this by suggesting that adapting the content to meet the needs of diverse visitor groups enhances the emotional connection and educational value of the tours. Thus, heritage guided tours that provide clear and culturally relevant interpretation are more likely to enhance satisfaction, encourage return visits, and support long-term tourism sustainability (Park et al., 2019; Crespi-Vallbona, 2020).

Heritage Interpretation and Satisfaction in Guided Tours

A fundamental aspect of cultural interpretation is the accuracy of the information presented during guided tours. Tilden (2007) emphasizes that effective interpretation should be clear and easily understood, enabling visitors to absorb complex cultural and historical content without confusion. Weiler and Ham (2002) further stress the importance of accuracy in cultural narratives. When cultural information is presented in a clear and concise manner, visitors are more likely to trust and appreciate the interpretation, leading to a more educational and credible experience. Prior literature has established that when cultural interpretation is accurate, authentic, engaging, and personally relevant, tourists are more likely to feel satisfied (Chen & Chen, 2010; Su et al., 2020). The interactive nature of these tours not only enhances enjoyment but also fosters long-term connection to the heritage site.

Accuracy in cultural interpretation plays a fundamental role in shaping tourist satisfaction. When the information provided during a heritage tour is factually correct, clearly articulated, and consistent with historical evidence, tourists tend to feel more confident in the tour's credibility. As highlighted by Weiler and Ham (2002), visitors are more likely to appreciate and value tours that provide reliable and well-researched information. Consequently, perceived accuracy enhances tourists' satisfaction by ensuring clarity and fostering a sense of trust in the cultural narratives presented. This leads to the hypothesis that the perceived accuracy of cultural interpretation significantly influences tourist satisfaction in heritage guided tours.

H1: The perceived accuracy of cultural interpretation during guided tours significantly influences tourist satisfaction with heritage sites.

While informational accuracy builds trust and cognitive clarity, authenticity infuses heritage interpretation with emotional depth and cultural significance. As a core dimension of meaningful heritage experiences, authenticity enables tourists to connect with the cultural essence of a site beyond superficial representations. Mason (2002) asserts that preserving the integrity of cultural heritage by avoiding distortion or commodification is essential to maintaining its interpretive value. Authentic representation ensures that local traditions and histories are not merely showcased but are respected and communicated with sincerity. In the context of heritage tourism, authenticity holds particular resonance. Richards (2001) emphasizes that contemporary tourists increasingly seek experiences that are not only educational but also emotionally and culturally enriching. This demand for authenticity reflects a broader shift toward experiential tourism, where genuine cultural engagement is prioritized over staged or commercialized narratives. Lima and Pinho (2020) reinforce this perspective, noting that authentic cultural experiences foster deeper emotional connections, heighten visitor engagement, and significantly enhance overall satisfaction.

Moreover, authenticity plays a pivotal role in fostering a personal sense of connection and respect toward the host culture. When cultural narratives are presented in an unembellished, truthful manner, tourists are more likely to perceive them as respectful, sincere, and meaningful. The emotional resonance created by authentic interpretation deepens the visitor experience and contributes to long-term cultural appreciation. This underscores the hypothesis that the perceived authenticity of cultural interpretation significantly influences tourist satisfaction in heritage guided tours.

H2: The perceived authenticity of cultural interpretation during guided tours significantly influences tourist satisfaction with heritage sites.

Engagement is a critical pillar of impactful heritage interpretation, directly shaping how tourists perceive, process, and connect with cultural narratives. Unlike passive, one-directional information delivery, which often results in cognitive fatigue or emotional detachment, active engagement fosters meaningful involvement, heightens attention, and strengthens both learning and emotional resonance. Techniques such as guided storytelling, interactive questioning, and participatory activities transform visitors from passive observers into active participants in the interpretive process. Pine and Gilmore's (1999) concept of the experience economy illustrates this paradigm shift, asserting that memorable tourism experiences arise when visitors are cognitively and emotionally immersed. In heritage contexts, this means interpretation should not merely convey facts, but craft experiences that invite reflection, curiosity, and interaction. Ham and Weiler (2003) support this view, noting that engaging interpretive approaches, especially those that stimulate dialogue or sensory involvement, enhance comprehension and deepen the visitor's connection to cultural content.

Active engagement also fosters a sense of personal relevance and value. When visitors are encouraged to question, interact, or emotionally connect with the material, they are more likely to internalize the meanings of heritage and feel a stronger attachment to the experience. This emotional investment contributes significantly to tourist satisfaction and the perceived authenticity of the encounter. Accordingly, this leads to the hypothesis that active visitor engagement during heritage guided tours significantly influences tourist satisfaction.

H3: Active visitor engagement during guided tours significantly influences tourist satisfaction with heritage sites.

Cultural relevance is a vital dimension of effective heritage interpretation, referring to the degree to which presented content aligns with the personal backgrounds, values, and lived experiences of tourists. Interpretation that resonates with a visitor's cultural frame of reference is more likely to elicit emotional engagement, cognitive retention, and a deeper sense of connection to the heritage site. Heath and Grierson (2003) emphasize that meaningful interpretation goes beyond factual accuracy by linking narratives to the visitor's own social and cultural context, thus enhancing the interpretive impact. This connection between content and personal relevance is essential in a globalized tourism landscape marked by diverse visitor profiles. Moscardo (2008) underscores the need for interpretive strategies that are adaptable to various demographic and cultural backgrounds, whether shaped by age, nationality, or prior cultural familiarity. Tailoring interpretation in this way not only ensures inclusivity but also amplifies its significance for different audience segments, making the experience feel personally meaningful rather than distant or generic.

When cultural narratives are framed in ways that tourists can relate to emotionally, socially, or intellectually, they are more likely to internalize the information and perceive the experience as authentic and enriching. This perceived relevance enhances both satisfaction and cultural appreciation, as visitors feel seen, respected, and intellectually stimulated. Thus, the hypothesis is proposed that the cultural relevance of interpretation significantly enhances tourist satisfaction during heritage guided tours.

H4: The cultural relevance of interpretation during guided tours significantly enhances tourist satisfaction with heritage sites.

Tourist satisfaction is a key factor in heritage guided tours, influencing the overall visitor experience and their likelihood to return to the site. Satisfaction is defined as the overall satisfaction of a tourist with the visit experience at a cultural heritage site (Chen & Chen, 2010). Cognitive Theory states that visitors assess their experience by analysing the information they are given during the tour and that their level of satisfaction is correlated with how well this information aligns with their expectations and areas of interest (Poria et al., 2006).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a quantitative approach to evaluate tourist satisfaction with cultural interpretation during guided tours in Melaka. Data was collected through a standardized questionnaire, administered to a sample of 216 respondents. The respondents were approached at convenient locations within key heritage sites, including Dutch Square, the Stadthuys, Porta de Santiago, and Melaka Hill, and were asked to complete the questionnaire on-site or through a Google Form link. The survey was divided into three sections, which include demographic information (part A), psychographic profile (part B) and tourists' experience with heritage guided tours (part C). The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly dissatisfied (1) to strongly satisfied (5).

The target population of this study consisted of both local and international tourists visiting Melaka and who experienced a guided tour during their stay. The sampling method used was convenience sampling, where participants were selected randomly at various heritage sites in the city. The study focused on evaluating key dimensions such as information accuracy, authenticity, engagement, and cultural relevance concerning their experience with the heritage guided tours. A pilot study was carried out with 20 samples before the main fieldwork to test the reliability of the research instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained ranged from 0.73 to 0.84, indicating an acceptable level of consistency, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability statistics

Dimension	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Accuracy	4	0.73
Authenticity	5	0.75
Engagement	6	0.84
Cultural Relevance	5	0.74
Satisfaction	5	0.71

DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic and Psychographic Profile

The items in tourists' profiles include respondents' gender, age, marital status, tourist status, education level, employment status, duration of tour, and type of trip. The findings and their interpretations in this research were presented in the table below.

Table 2 Demographic Profile

Demographic Item			%
Gender	Male	88	40.6
	Female	128	59.4
Age	18 - 25	64	29.7
	26 - 40	99	45.8
	41 - 60	50	22.9
	61 and above	3	1.6
Marital Status	Single	76	35.2
	Married	119	55.2
	Divorced	21	9.6
Origin	Within Melaka	18	8.1
	States Outside Melaka	46	21.4

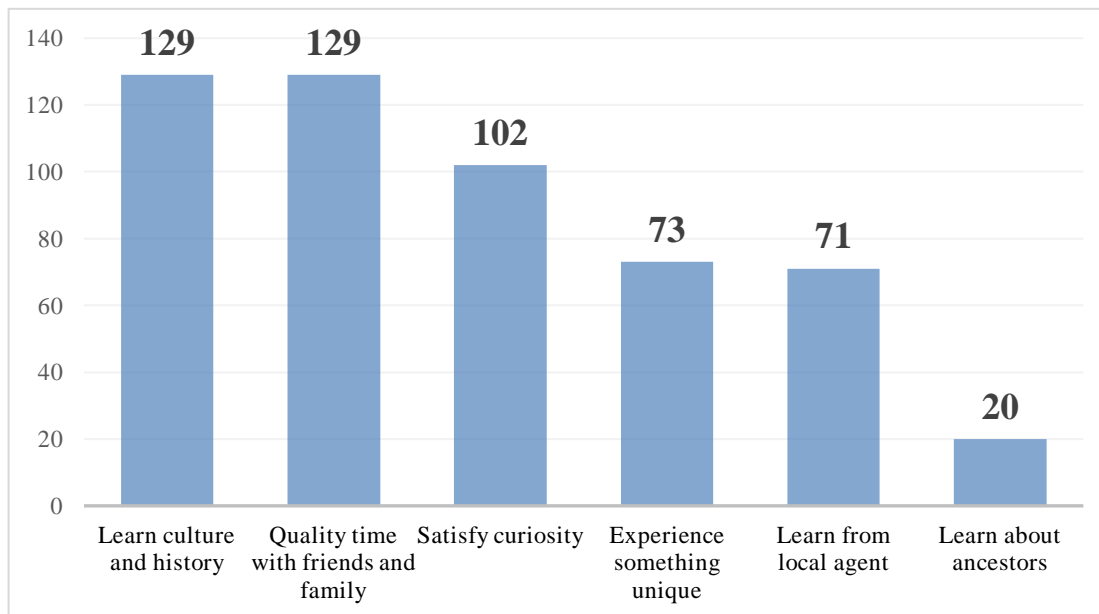
Demographic Item			%
Education	International	152	70.6
	High School	25	11.5
	Undergraduate	165	76.6
Employment	Postgraduate	26	12
	Public	29	13.5
	Private	75	34.9
	Self-employed	69	32
	Retired	13	6
	Unemployed	2	0.8
	Student	27	12.5
Tour Duration	Freelancer	1	0.3
	Less than 1 hour	18	8.1
	1-2 hours	161	74.7
	2-3 hours	21	9.9
	Half Day (4-5 hours)	11	5.2
	Full day (more than 5 hours)	5	2.1
Type of trip	Independent	36	16.7
	Group	168	77.6
	Business	12	5.7
Mode of Transport	Own/rental vehicle	41	19
	Public transport	20	9.1
	Tour Bus	132	60.9
	E-Hailing	10	4.7
	By foot	13	6.3
<i>n = 216</i>			

The findings revealed that the majority of respondents who participated in guided tours were female, indicating a possible higher level of interest among women in engaging with cultural content during travel. The age group most represented was 26–40 years old, suggesting that young to middle-aged adults are particularly drawn to guided tours, possibly due to their appreciation for cultural enrichment and structured experiences. In terms of marital status, most participants were married, which may imply that guided tours are seen as suitable and enjoyable activities for couples and families seeking meaningful travel experiences. International tourists made up the largest group, reflecting the tendency of foreign visitors to rely on guided tours to understand local heritage and culture, thus emphasizing the importance of effective cultural interpretation for enhancing tourist satisfaction. Education also played a significant role, with a substantial majority holding undergraduate qualifications. This suggests that individuals with higher education levels may have greater expectations for informative and engaging content and therefore respond more positively to high-quality cultural interpretation.

Moving on to employment, most respondents worked in the private sector, indicating that professionals may view guided tours not just as leisure activities but also as opportunities for cultural learning. The preferred tour duration was 1–2 hours, which aligns with the preference for concise yet rich cultural experiences that maintain engagement without causing fatigue. Group tours were the most common format, likely due to the structured and interactive nature of these tours, which often enhance the delivery of cultural narratives. Finally, the most utilized mode of transport was tour buses, which typically offer professional guides and organized commentary.

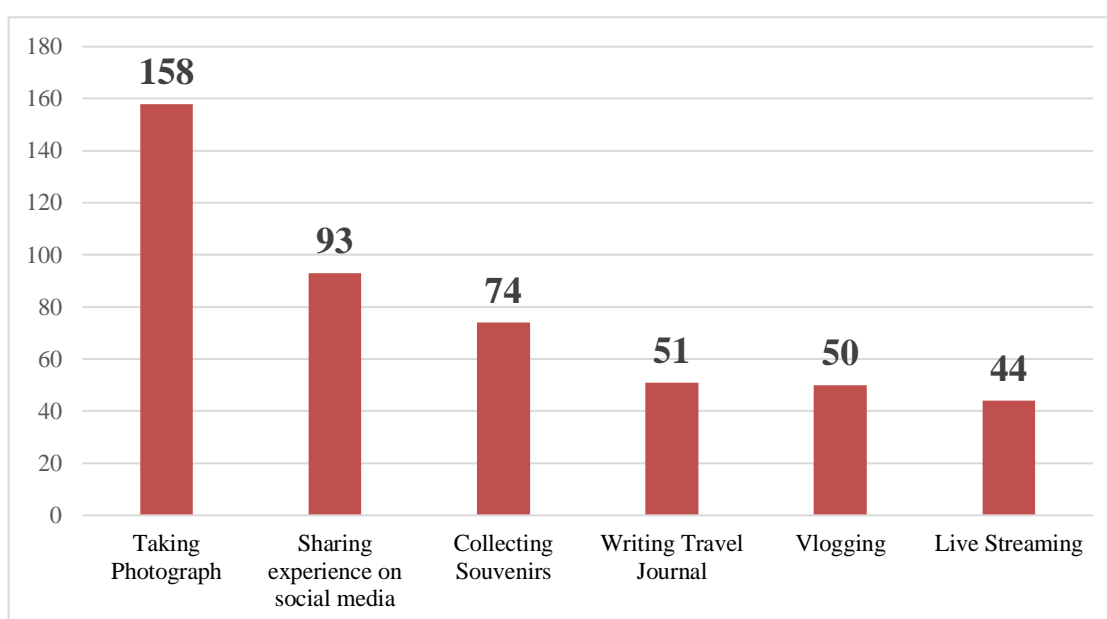
The items in tourists' psychographic profile include documenting preference, participating reasons, tour information sources, preferred communication tool, types of stories preferred and lastly type of attraction enjoyed. The findings and their interpretations in this research were presented through figures below.

Figure 1 Reasons for participating in guided tours



The motivations for participating in guided tours has revealed that the primary reason cited by respondents was the desire to learn more about the local culture and the historical background of the destination. This motivation was identified by 129 participants. An equal number of respondents also indicated that spending quality time with friends and family was a key reason for joining the tour, suggesting that social bonding is an equally significant factor. In contrast, only a small proportion of participants selected learning about their ancestors as a motivating factor, indicating that this reason holds a relatively niche appeal within the broader context of tour participation motivations.

Figure 2 Preferred methods for documenting guided tours



158 responses received on taking a photograph as the main approach to document a guided tour. It was then followed by sharing memories on social media with 93 respondents. The remaining were collecting souvenirs, travel journaling, vlogging, and 44 respondents chose live streaming.

Table 3 Psychographic Characteristics

Psychographic Items		<i>n</i>	%
Tour Information Sources	Social Media	97	(44.8)
	Family and Friends	79	(36.7)
	Official Websites	28	(12.8)
	Brochure	12	(5.7)
Preferred Communication tool	Live explanation	130	(60.2)
	Mobile apps	39	(18.2)
	Brochures	29	(13.3)
	Audio device	15	(7.0)
	Maps	3	(1.3)
Memorable types of stories	Historical event	97	(45.1)
	Myth and legends	60	(27.9)
	Local stories	44	(20.3)
	Cultural traditions	15	(6.8)
Preferred type of attraction	Historical landmark	70	(32.3)
	Museum	68	(31.5)
	Cultural & heritage sites	64	(29.4)
	Art Galleries	14	(6.8)
<i>n</i> =216			

According to the respondents' selections, social media emerged as the predominant method for obtaining tour information, utilized by 44.8%. Following that, recommendations from family and friends accounted for 36.7%. A smaller number of individuals relied on official websites or brochures. Most participants favored live explanations during tours for communication. Alternative solutions, such as mobile applications, brochures, audio devices, and maps, had lower popularity. Participants were most impacted by narratives concerning historical events, recalled by 45.1%. Myths and legends constituted the second most significant category, followed by local narratives. Accounts of cultural traditions were the least recalled. Historical landmarks were the most favored attractions, while museums accounted for lower preference, closely followed by cultural and heritage sites. Art galleries were the least favored.

Correlation Coefficient Analysis

The Pearson Correlation Matrix was utilised to investigate the relationship between the independent variables, which are accuracy of interpretation, authenticity of interpretation, visitor engagement, and cultural relevance, and the dependent variable, which is tourist satisfaction.

Table 4 Correlation Coefficient Analysis Results

		<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>Accuracy</i>	<i>Authenticity</i>	<i>Engagement</i>	<i>Relevance</i>
<i>Satisfaction</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.563**	.509**	.601**	.409**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	<i>n</i>	216	216	216	216	216
**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The correlations between satisfaction and the other factors show different strengths, with engagement having the strongest connection. The correlation between satisfaction and engagement is 0.601, meaning that as satisfaction increases, engagement also tends to rise. This suggests that more satisfied people are more engaged. Next, satisfaction and accuracy have a moderate to strong correlation of 0.563, indicating that

higher satisfaction is linked to better perceived accuracy. The correlation between satisfaction and authenticity is also moderate at 0.509, showing that as satisfaction increases, people tend to find the experience more authentic. The weakest correlation is between satisfaction and relevance at 0.409. While still positive, it shows that higher satisfaction is associated with greater perceived relevance, but the link is weaker compared to the other factors.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the conclusion and discussion of the study, focusing on the key factors that influence satisfaction with guided tour interpretation. The findings reveal that the interpretation model was strong and reliable, explaining a substantial portion of the variation in tourist satisfaction. Specifically, four main elements (accuracy, authenticity, engagement, and cultural relevance) were found to significantly contribute to how tourists perceive and evaluate their guided tour experiences.

Table 5 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.812 ^a	.660	.658	.14750

a. Predictors: (Constant), Accuracy, Authenticity, Engagement, Cultural Relevance

The results in table 5 show that the regression model is strong, with an R value of .812, which means there is a high positive relationship between the predictors (Accuracy, Authenticity, Engagement, and Cultural Relevance) and the dependent variable. The R Square value (.660) indicates that about 66% of the changes in the dependent variable can be explained by these four predictors. The Adjusted R Square (.658) is very close to the R Square value, which means the model is reliable and not affected much by the number of predictors.

Table 6 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.961	4	1.240	30.029	.000 ^b
	Residual	8.714	211	.041		
	Total	13.675	215			

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Accuracy, Authenticity, Engagement, Cultural Relevance

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting the dependent variable (satisfaction) from the four predictors (accuracy, authenticity, engagement, and cultural relevance). The F value of 30.029 with a p-value (Sig.) of .000 ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the model significantly improves the prediction of Satisfaction compared to a model with no predictors. This means that, taken together, these predictors have a significant effect on satisfaction.

Table 7 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.003	.360		2.789	.006
	Accuracy	.182	.082	.155	2.209	.009
	Authenticity	.108	.081	.093	1.333	.028
	Engagement	.403	.081	.359	4.991	.000
	Cultural Relevance	.097	.053	.126	1.817	.041

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

The multiple regression analysis examined how four factors (Accuracy, Authenticity, Engagement, And Cultural Relevance) predict user satisfaction. The results, shown in Table 7, indicate that the model was statistically significant, and several predictors had meaningful effects on satisfaction. Engagement had the strongest influence ($\beta = .359, p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of engagement during interpretation are strongly associated with greater satisfaction. Accuracy ($\beta = .155, p = .009$) and cultural relevance ($\beta = .126, p = .041$) also made significant contributions. Authenticity had a smaller effect ($\beta = .093$) but was still statistically significant ($p = .028$). Overall, the findings suggest that while accuracy, authenticity, and cultural relevance matter, engagement plays the most critical role in shaping user satisfaction.

The results of the hypothesis testing show that all four proposed factors significantly influence tourist satisfaction in heritage guided tours. The perceived accuracy of cultural interpretation had a moderately strong effect, indicating that tourists value information they believe to be correct and reliable. Similarly, the perceived authenticity of the interpretation also showed a significant influence, suggesting that genuine and believable storytelling enhances the visitor experience.

Table 8 Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Result	Conclusion
H1: The perceived cultural accuracy of guided tour interpretation significantly influences tourist satisfaction with heritage sites.	0.563	Supported
H2: The perceived cultural authenticity of guided tour interpretation significantly influences tourist satisfaction with heritage sites	0.509	Supported
H3: Visitor engagement of guided tour interpretation significantly influences tourist satisfaction with heritage sites.	0.601	Supported
H4: The cultural relevance of guided tour interpretation significantly enhances tourist satisfaction with heritage sites.	0.409	Supported

Visitor engagement recorded the highest impact, highlighting the importance of interactive and participatory elements in increasing satisfaction. This underscores that tourists enjoy being involved rather than passively listening. Lastly, the cultural relevance of the interpretation also contributed positively, though to a slightly lesser degree. This suggests that aligning the tour content with visitors' cultural expectations still plays an important role in shaping their overall satisfaction.

Recommendations

The analysis shows that cultural relevance scored the lowest among all dimensions. This indicates that many tourists felt the guided tours did not strongly connect them to the local culture. When the cultural elements are not clearly explained or presented in a meaningful way, tourists may find the experience less engaging and memorable. This weakens their overall satisfaction and may reduce the chances of them recommending or revisiting the heritage site.

To improve cultural relevance, tour guides should include more stories, traditions, and local practices in their explanations. Simple activities like short cultural performances, traditional games, or local craft demonstrations can make the experience more meaningful. Hiring local experts to share real-life insights or using videos and visuals to show the cultural background of the site can also help tourists understand and connect better. When tourists feel a stronger link to the culture, they are more likely to enjoy the tour and remember it positively.

Limitations of Study

Limitations of the study refer to factors beyond the researchers' control that may influence the methodology and conclusion. They include the shortcomings, conditions or influences that place restrictions on our methodology and conclusions. One major limitation of this study is the focus on fewer heritage sites. This

research was conducted at key tourist spots in Melaka, specifically Dutch Square, Jalan Kota, A Famosa Fortress and Bukit Melaka. These locations are popular and attract many tourists; however, many tourists were busy with their mobile devices, taking photos or enjoying their tours, which led to hesitation in answering the survey. As a result, they may have responded to the questions without properly understanding the whole meaning. The data was collected at tourist spots where most guided tours were conducted by a licensed tour guide. It would be interesting to conduct this same study at heritage sites but using a different approach through visual, audio, mobile, brochure, and map-based formats.

Furthermore, future research should explore other heritage sites in Melaka such as Jalan Heeren, Jalan Tukang Emas, Jalan Tukang Besi, Jalan Jonker, Jalan Hang Kasturi, Jalan Kampung Hulu, Jalan Tokong, Jalan Munshi Abdullah, Jalan Gereja, Jalan Laksamana, Jalan Merdeka, and Jalan Hang Lekiu, which are also significant historical and heritage sites of the historical city. In general, broadening the scope of research to include more heritage sites would provide a better comprehension perspective on enhancing tourist experiences. It would also help identify the factors influencing tourist satisfaction and their intention to return, while addressing strategies to address the unique challenges faced by different heritage sites.

REFERENCES

1. Alhadad, E., & Meparishvili, T. (2019). Cultural Heritage Tourism as an Innovative Catalyst of Local Development: Strategies and Actions. *International Journal of Heritage and Museum Studies*, 1(1).
2. Ap, J., & Wong, K. K. F. (2001). Case Study on Tour Guiding: Professionalism, Issues and Problems. *Tourism Management*, 22(5).
3. Bryon, J. (2012). Tour guides as storytellers - from selling to sharing. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 12(1).
4. Campbell, G., Smith, L., & Wetherell, M. (2017). Nostalgia and Heritage: Potentials, Mobilisations and Effects. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 23(7).
5. Campos, A. C., Mendes, J., do Valle, P. O., & Scott, N. (2018). Co-creation of tourist experiences: A literature review. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(4).
6. Cetin, G., & Yarkan, S. (2017). The professional relationship between tour guides and tour operators. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 17(4).
7. Chen, C. F., & Chen, F. S. (2010). Experience quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions for heritage tourists. *Tourism Management*, 31(1).
8. Cohen, E. (1985). The Tourist Guide. The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12(1).
9. Gross, H. M., Boehme, H., Schroeter, C., Mueller, S., Koenig, A., Einhorn, E., Martin, C., Merten, M., & Bley, A. (2009). TOOMAS: Interactive shopping guide robots in everyday use - Final implementation and experiences from long-term field trials. 2009 IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems, IROS 2009.
10. Ham, S. H., & Weiler, B. (2003). Tourism and the meaning of cultural heritage. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 1(1), 40–60.
11. Heath, S., & Grierson, C. (2003). Interpretive planning: A guide for museums and cultural sites. Museum Press.
12. Holloway, J. C. (1981). The Guided Tour a Sociological Approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 8(3).
13. Lima, P. R., & Pinho, J. C. (2020). Authenticity in cultural tourism: Conceptualization and influences on tourist satisfaction. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 15(5), 610–624.
14. Mason, R. (2002). The concept of authenticity in heritage studies. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 8(1), 1–14.
15. Moscardo, G. (2008). Building community capacity for tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(2), 424–443.
16. Montserrat Crespi-Vallbona. (2020). Satisfying experiences: guided tours at cultural heritage sites. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 16, 201–217.
17. Mykletun, R. J. (2013). IRFGT 2013: Third International Research Forum on Guided Tours (2013). *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 13(3).

18. Nowacki, M. (2021) Heritage Interpretation and Sustainable Development: A Systematic Literature Review, *Sustainability* Vol. 13 (8).
19. Overend, D. (2012). Performing sites: Illusion and authenticity in the spatial stories of the guided tour. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 12(1).
20. Park, E., Choi, B. K., & Lee, T. J. (2019). The role and dimensions of authenticity in heritage tourism. *Tourism Management*, 74.
21. Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & every business a stage*. Harvard Business Press.
22. Poria, Y., Biran, A., & Reichel, A. (2006). Tourist perceptions: Personal vs. non-personal. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 1(2).
23. Richards, G. (2001). Cultural Tourism: Europe's Future? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(3), 617–635.
24. Schmidt, C. J. (1979). The Guided Tour: Insulated Adventure. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 7(4).
25. Shin, C., & Yoon, H. (2020). Harmonizing divergent user preferences for cultural enrichment of small group visit. *Journal of Ambient Intelligence and Smart Environments*, 12(4).
26. Silvestrelli, P. (2013). Tourism development through heritage enhancement and hospitality innovation. *International Journal of Globalization and Small Business*, 5(1–2).
27. Stach, S. & Zündorf, I. (2022) Narrating History in Guided Tours, *Narrative Culture* Vol. 9 (2).
28. Sthapit, E., & Coudounaris, D. N. (2018). Memorable tourism experiences: antecedents and outcomes. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 18(1).
29. Su, D. N., Nguyen, N. A. N., Nguyen, Q. N. T., & Tran, T. P. (2020). The link between travel motivation and satisfaction towards a heritage destination: The role of visitor engagement, visitor experience and heritage destination image. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 34.
30. Tilden, F. (2007). *Interpreting our heritage* (4th ed.). University of North Carolina Press.
31. Tsegaw, W. E., & Teressa, D. K. (2017). Tour Guiding Quality Assurance Mechanisms and Respective Tourist Satisfaction: Evidence from South Ethiopia. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, 06(06).
32. Weiler, B., & Ham, S. H. (2002). Tourism and cultural heritage: A case study of cultural interpretation at a historic site. *Journal of Travel Research*, 41(1), 53–63.
33. Zhang, H. Q., & Chow, I. (2004). Application of importance-performance model in tour guides' performance: Evidence from mainland Chinese outbound visitors in Hong Kong. *Tourism Management*, 25(1).