



Comparing literary tourism in Mainland China and Taiwan: The Lu Xun Native Place and the Lin Yutang House



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HIGHLIGHTS

- The two sites both received very high visitor satisfaction in literariness, affectivity, authenticity, service, and convenience.
- Visitors did not consider literariness to be the most important, and felt that the authenticity was the most important.
- Newly built memorial halls around Lu Xun's former residence were unacceptable to visitors because they lacked "authenticity".
- Lin Yutang's former residence has been developed into a platform for promoting studies related to Lin Yutang.

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ABSTRACT

Renowned writers are noted for their literary works. Sometime their former residences and birthplaces become landmarks where readers can pay homage to or trace the footsteps of places that inspired the literature. This study compares two writers' residences in Asia, the Lu Xun Native Place in southern China and the Lin Yutang House in Taiwan. A review of Lu Xun's and Lin Yutang's lives and their literary works was conducted and their significance noted. Then surveys with questionnaires, open-ended interviews, and on-site observations were conducted and importance-performance analysis (IPA) was utilized, in order to understand the visitors' satisfaction. Also, perusal of advertising and promotional literature for the two places and interviews with the administrative staffs of the two literary places gave better comprehension of local governments' policies and operation strategies for these places. From information gathered from the two cases we may consider how to strike a balance between literary value and economic effects and use this information as a vital tool when planning a literary tourism site. Both literary tourism sites have seen a steady growth in the number of tourists. This can be seen as a positive message about the fast-growing Asian tourism business and the need to prepare sites such as the two examined here.

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1. Introduction

China's tourism industry has rapidly developed since China's economic reform in 1978 (Yang, Liu, & Qi, 2014). The "golden week holiday", which was set by the Chinese government in 1999 to drive economic development, further stimulated the development of its travel and tourism industry (York & Zhang, 2010). The policy turned literary places into tourism resources for local governments. As a matter of fact, literary places have long been tourist attractions in other countries around the world (Hoppen, Brown, & Fyall, 2014),

and many Western scholars have studied literary places and literary tourism, including defining a literary place as a particular place associated with a writer or literary work (Herbert, 1996; Squire, 1993a, 1996), and proving the value of literary tourism with respect to culture and tourism (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001; Herbert, 2001).

In contrast to the Western world, most Chinese literary writers are more than just writers. Starting in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, literary writers with exceptional talent and knowledge became government officials and took part in politics after passing the Imperial Examination (an examination system in which the emperor selected government officials based on their writing) (Feng, 1995). Even though the system was abolished in 1911 after the Republic of China was founded, and literary writers were no longer able to become government officials based solely on their writing,

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their concern for politics had long become a deep-rooted tradition. The literary writers hoped to awaken the public and change their country's fate through their works. Hence, they often wrote very political works on recent affairs, and their fate was often tied to their works. This was especially the case in the volatile times at the end of the 19th century, when the imperial regime was overturned; civil war broke out and literary writers were forced into exile overseas by the turmoil. Chinese society was then separated into two sides of the Taiwan Strait as a result of political divergence. Today, the former residences of literary writers have become tourist attractions promoted by the tourism industry. They have become places where the writers are remembered and where visitors across the strait search for traces of their works.

An estimate of the well-known former residences of modern literary writers that have been opened to tourists in Mainland China and Taiwan is shown in Table 1. In China, the former residence of Lu Xun was the earliest to be open to tourists. Some other literary places were opened in the late 1980s, and the majority of literary tourism sites has been opened since 2000. In Taiwan, the former residences of Hu Shih and Lin Yutang were earlier to be opened to tourists, and the majority of literary places were also opened around 2000. At present, the former residences of Lu Xun in Shaoxing, Mainland China and Lin Yutang in Taipei, Taiwan both enjoy great popularity and see an extremely large number of visitors. Moreover, they can be considered the two most influential writers in the region as Lu Xun wrote the first piece of vernacular literature in China – *A Madman's Diary*, which reveals the hypocrisy and cruelty of the feudal society, and laid the foundation for China's modern literature (Lu, 1918); while Lin Yutang became the first Chinese writer to be nominated for the Nobel Prize for his English novel – *Moment in Peking*, which describes wartime in China (Lin, 1999, p. 58). It is noteworthy that the two literary places are separately located in Mainland China and Taiwan, which have different political, economic and cultural backgrounds (Chao, 2003). Therefore, a comparative study of the two places possesses special value and meaning.

It is for this reason this study examines the former residences of Lu Xun in Shaoxing, Mainland China and Lin Yutang in Taipei, Taiwan, hoping to understand the current state of literary tourism, reasons for visiting literary places, what visitors gain from the experience, and visitor satisfaction. This study then analyzes and discusses the competitive advantages and future development challenges of literary places. Also, considering that cases of existing studies on literary tourism are concentrated in North America and Europe, with only a few cases in Japan and South Korea (Hoppen et al., 2014), this study can make a contribution to understanding cases in Asia.

2. Theoretical framework

Literary tourism places are celebrated for associations with books or authors (Herbert, 1996; Squire, 1993a, 1996). Research on this question has determined that literary tourism is shaped by the intersection of writer (biographical facts and real places associated with the author) and fiction (settings and characters) (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001). Herbert further proposed that literary places are no longer accidents of history, sites of a writer's birth or death; they are also social constructions, created, amplified, and promoted to attract visitors (Herbert, 2001).

Yet, writers and literary works are not the only attractions of literary places. After looking through Beatrix Potter's life, literature, and the association between the two with literary tourism, even though Potter's stories, which use her hometown as the background, are starting points that bring back visitors' childhood memories and nostalgia for life in the countryside, Squire

concluded that many visitors to Potter's former residence are there to keep family or friends company (Squire, 1993a, 1993b).

As a matter of fact, not all visitors are interested in the writer or have read related literary works. A survey of visitors in Cabourg, Pont-Aven and Auvers in northern France found that even though visitors had some understanding of the writer Paul Gauguin, most visitors were not experts in literature and art, and often did not have a thorough understanding of the artist and his works (Herbert, 1996). Visitors in Laugharne, adopted home to Dylan Thomas 1949 to 1953, and Chawton, home to Jane Austen 1809 to 1817, in the United Kingdom were interviewed to learn the kinds of prior knowledge that they possessed and their reasons for making the visit. Even though many of the visitors expressed interest in the writer or literary work, only 15% of the visitors could be categorized as literary pilgrims. The majority of visitors were there to relax, and were able to gain a relaxing, leisurely, and nostalgic experience through the natural environment, landscape, and distinguishing historical architectures (Herbert, 2001).

Even so, visitors do not overlook the authenticity of former residences. Fawcett conducted interviews and informal conversations with site guardians, and learned the opinions of site guardians in the former house of Canadian author L. M. Montgomery regarding authenticity (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001). As it turns out, visitors widely supported "preserving things as they were and for the general concept of conservation", but Fawcett and Herbert believed that authenticity does not necessarily mean preserving things in their original form and not duplicating the things (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001; Herbert, 2001). Even though Fawcett included the three interpretative forms (modernist, rationalist, and eclectic) of authenticity of literary tourism sites using Goffman's suggestion (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001), he did not mention the perspective of visitors, when in fact the perspective of visitors concerning authenticity has been a popular topic of discussion in literary tourism (Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Littrell, Anderson, & Brown, 1993; Wang, 1999). In Cohen's study on the relationship between authenticity and commoditization, he discovered that most rank-and-file visitors have a broader definition of authenticity compared with scholars and experts, and that whether or not a place is authentic or not largely depends on the visitor's individual understanding (Cohen, 1988). Chhabra et al. believe that despite the discrepancies of visitors' opinion on authenticity, authenticity remains an important factor in measuring travel quality, and is also a deciding factor when it comes to visitor satisfaction (Chhabra, Healy, & Sils, 2003).

From another perspective, site guardians are concerned about scenic environments, views, and a range of facilities from afternoon teas to souvenirs, as well as general qualities, e.g. geographical convenience and a location that fits into a route, in order to increase the attraction of literary places (Herbert, 2001). Past studies on literary tourism have not dwelled much on visitors' opinions of the above mentioned management issues or even visitor satisfaction, but since they are tourist attractions, factors such as souvenirs, dining, services, and ticket fee are also influencing visitor satisfaction (Lee, 2015).

Among the methodologies to measure the satisfaction of visitors of tourism or leisure destinations, importance and performance analysis (IPA) has been successfully employed to understand visitor's satisfaction and prioritize service quality improvements (Bacon, 2003; Lee, 2015). IPA is a simple but effective tool that analyses quality attributes on two dimensions: performance and importance (Lai & Hitchcock, 2015). It had been employed for understanding visitor satisfaction and management issues in hot spring tourism (Chen, 2014; Deng, 2007), wine tourism (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004), and zoo tourism (Lee, 2015). It proved to be a proper method to be utilized in tourism related investigations.

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