

# An Exploration to Heritage Tourism in Chester: The Curious ‘Deva’

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**Abstract**— This paper deals with the heritage tourism management in Chester, a historic city in North West England. In spite of the Roman heritage of the Chester, the contemporary shopping facilities, and other modern amenities are criticised to evanescent the historical importance of the location. This qualitative research study focused on the visitor management, preferences, and tourism marketing criteria in the Chester to understand the current scenario of tourist's preference in the place. The results indicate that the glorious Roman history, as well as the variety of heritage attraction, are the leading pull factor for the rising demand for Chester. Many of the visitors selected Chester Cathedral, Shopping, Historic attraction, and Zoo as their preferred attractions. Moreover, both inbound and outbound tourists visit the location, in which specific heritage tourists are females than males with peculiar ardors in the history, high education, income in their middle ages.

**Keywords**— Heritage tourism; visitor management; qualitative research; heritage tourist attractions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Heritage tourism grows to be a trendsetter in the global tourism industry with its economic and non-economic benefits. Moreover, it is a mushrooming topic among the tourism studies also. According to Nuryanti (1996, p. 250) “tourism’s fundamental nature is dynamic, and its interaction with heritage often results in a reinterpretation of heritage. In its essence, the relationship between heritage and tourism parallels the debate that takes place within a society’s culture between tradition and modernity”. The high potential of heritage tourism is now recognised by the governments and other tourism authorities. Since the term heritage is highly linked with the past, it sometimes represents national identity and integrity (Yale, 1991).

Heritage and historical forms of tourism is the rapidly expanding sector in the global tourism sector and “heritage tourism identifies and presents the places where national or local values were created and continue to reside, and builds community pride and civic vitality” (Heritage Council Western Australia, 2006, p. 6). It has been widely recognized for its long-term conservative value, and it creates investment for conservation, cultural regeneration, local community rejuvenation, new product development in heritage sector and so on. Moreover, being one of the most profitable segments in global tourism with a sustainable growth rate, all the advantageous driven by heritage tourism has comparatively with little impact and protective.

Humankind is curious to know their ancestry, novelty and existence; this interest catalyses heritage tourism demand all over the world. “Today a great deal of time and energy is dedicated to looking backwards, toward capturing a past which, in many ways, is considered superior to the chaotic present and the dreaded future” (Dann, 1994, p. 70). According to Hollinshead (1993), there is a significant change in the tourist profile especially in their preference and selection, and the volume of heritage/ cultural tourists are rising in recent years. Also, he points out that this growing trend is highly visible in the case of travellers involved in archaeological, adventure, heritage and community tourism.

Heritage tourism not only attracts the visitors but also aids preservation and conservation of heritage attributes like monuments, artefacts and so on. Hewison (1987) supports these characteristics of heritage tourism. He states that recently this heritage connected the globe inseparably and tourism provides the monetary fund for the conservation. This applies to the arts, music, and folks. Heritage attributes are the best sellers in contemporary tourism. The versatile significance of the heritage attraction is evident in educational, anthropological, archaeological and historical elements. The commodification of culture and heritage has both advantages and disadvantages in tourism perspectives. Historical monuments, artefacts, remaining and so on are the most selling commodities of the global tourist's industry. As stated in earlier paragraphs this is due to the curiosity of human beings for their ancestry. The motivation for these; grand tours’ may vary from education, cultural to the oldest motivation for travel spirituality (Burkhart & Medlik, 1974).

This study mainly focuses on marketing and visitor management in heritage tourism. Since these two factors can directly or indirectly influence the success or failure of destination, this inquiry emphasis these two aspects related to the study location. The “growth of the tourism industry has seen a new tourism product called heritage tourism, which has been suggested to be one of the trump cards for the tourism industry of the future” (Frangialli, 2002, p. 1007). The rising demand for heritage tourism is evident in the increasing number of visitors all over the world. All these factors underline the necessity of strategical approaches for heritage tourism management, marketing, practices, visitor management and sustainability. Leask and Yeoman (1999) point out the need for adequate management techniques for reducing the conflict between the heritage tourism and conservation, as it depicts the past in the frame of the present.

## Chester

Chester is a city in Cheshire, England. The city 2,000 years of history and it has been an open centre for travellers and visitors Romans established Chester or ‘Deva’ in the form of a military camp. They called this castrum as ‘Deva Victrix’ and

occupied for 300 years. As a strategic location, from Chester, Romans can communicate to the north and control Wales as well as another southern part of Britain after their invasion in AD 43. The city is surrounded by the river Dee, and it plays a significant role in commerce on that era. "On the ruins of Roman city Saxons and then Normans build a new large town, gracing it with an abbey and fortified with a castle. Around it, they built larger city walls, which proved so strong and impenetrable that they survive intact almost today. Next, the Rows, the half-timbered houses of medieval merchants, built over stone cellars and linked together by galleried walkways. In Tudor time the abbey becomes cathedral" (McIlwain, 2004, p. 4). Still, it remains as a significant Roman monument in Britain. Chester is considered as a vital heritage city, and around 6 million visitors come each year to enjoy the heritage, food, shopping and so on. Chester provides some attributed to the visitors. This study mainly focuses on heritage tourism marketing and visitor management in Chester.

#### *Research Problem and Sub-Problems*

The research problem of this study is to explore the heritage tourism in Chester and to recognise who is interested in the precious Roman history of Chester or Deva. This study has three different subproblems as the following: -

1. To understand the correlation between heritage tourist's perceptions and experience towards the popularity of various attractions.
2. To understand the characteristics of the heritage tourists, compare to the general tourists in the study location.
3. To explore the perception of international tourists and to understand why do the overseas tourists come to Chester or what do they like to experience in the destination.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study mainly focuses on heritage tourism marketing and visitor management and these two factors can directly or indirectly influence the success or failure of destination, this study emphasizes these two aspects related to the study location. Marketing of heritage products is predetermined criteria for better tourist's inflows to the destination. In the case of heritage tourism, marketing aspects emphasize two-term like heritage tourism in a destination and special heritage attractions (Timothy, 2011). Chester is famous for its rich heritage and a treasure of numerous attractions. Timothy (2011) explains the vital role of historic sites and museums as the essential product mix in heritage destinations. According to him other significant criteria for heritage tourism marketing are branding or promotion and positioning. These can be attained by the participation of governments, authorities and media. Since solitary marketing of these meticulous attractions are more reachable and thus help to increase the visitations. It can be argued that this form of single attribute marketing is beneficial than unique marketing of a destination in heritage tourism because each of historical attraction has its specific characteristics. Visitor management is highly significant regarding a heritage site. The demographic, psychometric and behavioural characteristics of tourists must be analysed for getting a high level of visitor satisfaction. Satisfaction in a

trip regulates the decision of revisit. Moreover, so many things like motivation factors, what the visitors did on the site, their spending, needs and opportunities all are very much crucial for a destination.

#### *Heritage Attractions*

Tourist attractions can be defined as "a physical or cultural feature of a particular place that individual travellers or tourists perceive as capable of meeting one or more of their specific leisure-related needs. Such features may be ambient (e.g. climate, culture, vegetation or scenery), or they may be specific to a location, such as a theatre performance, a museum or a waterfall" (Harris and Howard, 1996, p. 452). There are different versions for the type and categories of heritage attraction by different researchers.

According to Sethi (1999) heritage includes "historic buildings and monuments; the sites of important past events like battles; traditional landscapes and indigenous wildlife; language, literature, music, and art; traditional events and folklore practices; traditional lifestyles including food and drink and sport" (Sethi, 1999: 1). Physical forms include buildings, archaeological sites, maritime places, historic sites, battlefield, events stages, scientific heritage, mining industries, agricultural heritage, ruins as well as historic parks, museums and so on. Intangible heritage is culture, rituals, festivals, traditions, languages, arts, paintings, poems, literature, events, social practices, human doings, histories and intercultural interface.

Hall and Zeppel (1990) describes that landscapes, historical places, monuments are in the group of heritage tourism products. They emphasize the significance and historical importance of these attributes. Visitors are believed to experience the past on their visit to these places "in the sense of seeking an encounter with nature or feeling part of the history of the place" (Hall and Zeppel, 1990, p. 54). They noticed that these heritage attractions are the trendsetters in contemporary tourism marketing and invite the attention of millions of people.

Prideaux and Kininmont (1999) in their research on the rural heritage museums in Australia found that museums, landscapes, galleries, urban centres, historic buildings, monuments, parks, festivals and events are the most important heritage attractions for the visitors. Hargrove (2002) describes that heritage tourism products of United States of America is very diverse and includes "all historic areas in the national park system, over 2,300 National Historic Landmarks and properties—sites, buildings, districts, structures, and objects—deemed significant to the nation, a state, or local community" (Hargrove, 2002, p. 10). He points out that any attributes which listed under the label of heritage property must undergo specific criteria like archaeological examinations, period and architecture analysis as well as the historical significance check.

Orbasli and Woodward (2009) grouped heritage attributes into two categories like reorganised heritage attraction (monuments, castles, stately homes, manor houses, archaeological sites) and managed heritage sites (city quarters, historic towns, rural settlements). In which the former

category has defined borderline with access charge. Moreover such attractions “have been places of speculating and bewilderment, the testimony of architecture and artistic achievements of their time” (Orbasli and Woodward, 2009:319). Which are highly protected and conserved since most of them are considered as a part of national pride or assets? The latter groups have a fusion of old and contemporary style at the same time they involved and be a part of living culture. Moreover, as Ashworth and Tunbridge (1990) state the way or representation of historic town/ city/ village, as well as the consumption of these particular heritage products by the visitors, are different from the other ‘designated’ heritage attractions.

Prentice (1994) built up a typology for heritage attractions and listed as towns and ‘landscapes, religious attractions, stately and ancestral homes and ‘socio-cultural attractions’. Timothy (2011) and Smith (2009) listed shopping, museums, cathedrals, castles, historical monuments, battlefields, archaeological sites, galleries, gardens, parks, other historic houses and churches are the most significant attraction of Britain’s heritage tourism.

Timothy and Boyd (2003) classify heritage attractions into three different categories. The first group includes the physical immovable attributes like monuments, buildings, castles and so on. The Second category consist of the impermanent physical attractions like artefacts and the last groups of heritage attractions are the physical ones like customs, traditions, rituals and so on. According to them, these products are the heart of heritage tourism as well as these are the precious representatives of the past.

Nutrick (2000) points out the vital role of the historic attractions in the contemporary tourism, and he states that recent tourists like to visit this kind of historic sites rather than the traditional sun and sea destinations. He explains the current trends of heritage tourism are due to the dynamic nature of the tourist's industry and heritage form of tourism can be considered as a long-lasting investment. Castles, gardens, churches and cathedrals, museums, zoo, railways, old industries, archaeology sites, countryside, historic buildings, monuments, battlefields and traditions are the primary heritage attributes.

#### *Heritage Tourist Characteristic*

Hollinshead (2006) states that the heritage tourism sector is proliferating and it is evidenced by the percentage of heritage tourist involved in the global tourism. Tourist profile or characteristics are significant in heritage tourism destination management and marketing. These characteristics involve age, income, education backgrounds, origin, gender and so on. Both demographic, as well as the socio-economic parameters, have a vital role in heritage tourism marketing. Recent studies on heritage tourists are summarized in the review of the literature. Silberberg (1995) explains common characteristics of heritage visitors. He points out that heritage tourists are not like general tourists. Heritage tourists are economically sounder than others, they receive more income and spend more, and most of them are women than men, usually educated than the general community. Also heritage, visitors

use more time for visitation. Since these categories of tourists are explicitly looking for understandings and knowledge of the trip rather than enjoyment and leisure.

Timothy (2011) categorised heritage tourists based on the ‘demographics, psychographics and place of origin’ for a better understanding and investigation of their practices and distinctiveness. Demographic categorisation is by individual socioeconomic and social parameters like age, gender, income, educational background, occupation, marital status and so on. Furthermore, he observed that the age of heritage tourists is differing from location to location. For example, in the case of American heritage tourists, they tend to be older, and many of them are retired. However, it is believed that heritage visitors are youngsters and middle-aged people from 30 – 50 years old. Educationally heritage tourists are higher than general visitors, and most of them are graduates or postgraduates. He observes that “serious heritage tourists tend to be best educated, with a strong personal interest in some aspects of history, such as culture, migration, museums and various manifestations of heavy industries such as mining or railroads” (Timothy, 2011, p. 27). Also, these kinds of visitors prepare their trip in advance and tend to collect prior information about the destination of their visit by reading and researching. There is another kind of heritage visitors known as literary tourists; they have particular desire to visit the places that they read in books or the place where their favourite authors live. Heritage tourists are occupied in high-class jobs than other tourists. As they stayed longer duration in the destination, they can understand more about the history of the place.

Richards (2001) found that more than 2/3 of heritage and cultural tourists are professionals or placed as managers and the 1/3 of them are service/ sales personnel. Moreover, heritage tourists pay out a significant amount of money for shopping, accommodation and food when compared to other forms of tourists. He suggests that heritage tourism attracts more females than males.

Kerstetter, Confer, and Graefe (2001) researched on the heritage tourism in Pennsylvania for exploring the specialisation and heritage tourists. They found that this category of tourists has particular interest to understand the historical perspectives of the destination. Those individuals spend more days in the destination, highly educated, economically sound, and spend more money on their visits. These people differ in behavioural characteristics, motivations and the frequency of visitation concerning regular tourists. Also, the researchers classified heritage tourists as specialists. Master and Prideaux (2000) studied Taiwanese heritage tourist’s characteristics in response to attractions and satisfaction and reveals that heritage tourists differ in age, gender, income and educational level.

Peterson (1994) classifies heritage visitors into four distinct groups, and they are believed to be more enthusiastic, deeply involved and devotees of the tourism activity compared to the general tourists. These kinds of heritage visitors have a high degree of curiosity for knowing the real thing that they seek out in the concerned visit. The first group consists of aficionados, as stated earlier this type of visitors are fully

involved in their visitation and related activities. These are considered as preservation list with may / may not with good educational/professional in history. The second set of the category are event visitors; they prefer to visit the destination on the occasion of special events. Other groups are tourists and casual visitors. In which the former is lived away from the destination and visiting these heritage sites as general tourists. The following kind of tourists visits due to their convenience.

Craik (1995) explains that heritage visitors make “customized excursions into other cultures and places to learn about their people, lifestyle, heritage and arts in an informed way that genuinely represents those cultures and their historical contexts” (Craik, 1995, p. 6). Clark (1995) studied the heritage tourism in Ankorvat regions revealed that that heritage tourists have higher education and most of them are professional and interested in visiting the destination with prior knowledge about the place. These particular segments of tourists are particular interest in arts, tradition, culture and rituals.

Lee (1999) investigated the heritage tourists profile like the number of visitors and past experiences. He correlates these criteria with demographic characteristics of the visitors like age, income, gender, education and profession. Taylor et al., (1993) on his study in north-central Wyoming reported that heritage visitors to this location are a crucial factor in tourism and leisure industry. They found that heritage visitors are different from the other tourists in the same destination and the heritage travellers are repeatedly using the promotional materials like brochures and leaflets, map, road signs and so on. Moreover, these heritage visitors prefer to engage in the reflexive activities like going to places of interest, animals/bird watching, museum visiting, enjoyment and driving. This research explores that the historic visitors tend to be older, gather information before the trip by using various resources like a trip planner and spend extra money during their visit.

Fomica and Uysal (1998) on their quantitative study in Italy found that heritage tourists are highly interested in participating in traditional and rituals and this can be effective to make segmentation in the contemporary heritage tourism market.

Previous studies enlighten that foreign tourists are more involved in historical travels and most of the visitors are keen to understand the historical significance of the destinations. Many of the researchers are agreed with some common characteristics of heritage visitors that they are above middle age group, comparatively educated and with better jobs than general tourists. However, most of them are failed to explain the reason behind it. It is discomfited to know the familiar public is not interested in heritage. Moreover, gender-wise females are particularly interested in heritage/ cultural tourism than males. However, most of these studies are oriented with a positivistic approach; there may be a generalisation and a single reality. The segments of heritage attractions are very diverse and blended with other forms of tourism attractions. Therefore, it may be beneficial to present a fusion of all these under a single category of heritage tourism attributes.

Heritage traits are the fundamental elements of the declaration of place in the map of tourism. There are built historical attractions, as well as natural attractions, exist. However, destinations with built heritage must consider the matter of authenticity. Since heritage tourists are specific kinds of visitors and their characteristics and preference may change in future. Also, they may demand the authentic experiences from heritage destinations. There are various kinds of literature are available in heritage tourism studies in Britain, and the existing literature did not sufficiently addressee the issues of heritage tourism and attraction management. Additionally, some more empirical studies are essential to prove the heritage tourism and matter of authenticity and tourist’s satisfaction.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study follows the tenets of the qualitative methodology as guided by interpretive paradigmatic framework, supported by bricoleurship and triangulation to gather relevant data about heritage tourism in Chester.

Decrop (1999, p. 158) defines triangulation as “looking at the same phenomenon, or research question, from more than one source of data. Information coming from different angles can be used to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research problem”. Therefore, the application of triangulation can minimize the bias and drawbacks of a single source of data or method. In-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews and document analysis (tourism promotional materials) are the main data tools adopted for this study.

Three methods were adopted for this study to gather data. Firstly, four in-depth interviews were conducted with the tourism officials in the location. Secondly, the twenty semi structured interviews were performed with the international and British tourists came to Chester for a two-month period. For both the interviews, snow- ball sampling technique was adopted complementary and responsive manner to the research sub questions of this study. Thirdly, tourism promotional materials were collected from the various heritage tourism attractions. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was deployed to analyse the collected information. The entire data was categorised in to five major (heritage attractions, visitor experience, preference, historical importance and characteristic of tourists) themes and seven associated sub themes

### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The exploration of the tourism sector to the location underlines the glorious Roman past, and historical background of the Chester as the fundamental reason for the rising demand for the study location. Although, changes in the tourist preference towards the popular destinations, passion to shopping, the presence of versatile or intermixture types of tourism attractions, ease of access for both domestic as well as international visitors and so are behind a consistent record of millennium visitors to Chester. Furthermore, education and archaeological significances are also essential reasonableness.

As in the recent literatures heritage attractions are a broad category and much evident in the tourism map of Chester. All

the attributes have their characteristics and perspectives, e.g. Cathedral (1,000 years of history), Museums (great exhibitions of Roman era), amphitheatre (archaeological significance) and zoo (one of the largest in the country). However, the selection of a fascinating attraction in the region may depend on the popularity, volume visitation, accessibility, historical perspectives, enjoyment, the motivation of visits and kind of visitor.

As per tourism statistical records, millions of visitors arrive in Chester. According to the study finding both domestic and foreign tourists come to the location. Those who are particularly interested in the heritage of the Deva, have the same demographical, inspirational and behaviour characteristics as discerned by the previous researchers. However, some disagreement aroused with the prior gathering of knowledge about the selected destinations. Many of them were not indicatively congregated any prior information about the site as observed by Craik (1995) and Taylor et al., (1993). Many of the in-depth interview participants agreed that the females are the frequent visitors of the place. The possible reason behind the pattern may due to the excellent shopping facility of the destination and it is believed that females are more persistent in shopping than the males.

According to Poria et al., (1996), the tourists gaze to the heritage site contribute to specific insights however crucial in many ways. As the participant in the in-depth interview (Participant -4, female, age: 33) states, Chester got magnificent ancestry and due to these images, millions of visitors come to experience this fabulous heritage. In-depth interviews with tourism officials result that the rich heritage of the study area applies to academic, archaeological and tourism field. Similarly, Hollinshead (2006) reported the influence of culture and heritage on the selection of a destination by the tourists. Informer 5 (Participant -5, male, age: 50) underlines the educational significance of historical remaining, museums and other exhibitions and academic people like school/ college groups are the most frequent visitors to museums and Chester. Moreover, several archaeological excavations are undergoing in the place since these all are related to the matter of national identity. These findings are in line with the arguments of Prentice (1993) describes that educational intention is the primary motivation behind the visit to the heritage sites. However, contrast with Chen's (1996) study, it emphasise that there is no such relationship between the heritage tourism and academic interests.

The semi-structured with the tourists reveals that the satisfaction level is medium. This is evidence the inadequacy of service quality and the lack of coordination between the attractions. Oversupply of promotional materials also indicated by the international tourists and sometimes it makes confusion among the visitors. However, it is believed that singular marketing of heritage products is better than a unique promotional activity as a single destination, because of the discrete eccentricity.

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