

Chapter 10

Literary Tourism: Places and Events for Cultural Valorization and Local Development

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ABSTRACT

The chapter intends to provide an overview on literary tourism valorization. The first part identifies its main benefits, main literary places (book locations, book film adaptation sets, places related to writers, literary attractions), and literary events (festivals, book fairs, and other events). The second part presents some issues on the demand side and provides the description of two possible literary journeys, with different connections with both literary places and products. The third part of the chapter is focused on how to effectively valorize literary tourism, through the design of valuable experiences.

INTRODUCTION

In her book ‘The Namesake’ Jhumpa Lahiri writes “*That’s the thing about books. They let you travel without moving your feet*” (2004). Books allow ideal travels, both in time and space. And those particularly engaging ones, can also encourage readers to go and make a real visit to described places.

Even though literary tourism received specific research attention in the last Eighties, literary travels were taken long before. Hendrix (2009) recalls that first documented literary travels can be dated back up to Romans: back then, already Cicero mentioned the practice to go, honor and contemplate writers’ graves. With ups and downs, related to historical events, economic, and cultural contingencies, literary travels became more popular in the 18th century (MacLeod et al., 2018) with cultural educational experiences like the Grand Tour on European cultural routes.

Literary tourism is a sub-segment of cultural tourism, and can be defined as “*travel inspired by an association with authors or their literary works and studies in the field*” (MacLeod et al., 2018, p.388).

It has been studied from various perspectives, like cultural geography, history of literature, marketing, in terms of destination management and/or tourist behavior.

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Literary tourism is an additional resource for sustainable place development, which still offers margins of growth.

The chapter intends to offer an overview from a marketing perspective on this specific tourism segment.

The first part identifies main benefits from its valorization and main types of literary tourism products. The second part describes some issues on the demand side, including expectations, sensemaking and sense of place. Two types of literary journeys are identified and described. The third part of the chapter is about how to effectively valorize literary tourism, through the design and delivery of valuable experiences. Some problems and solutions are set.

LITERATURE TOURISM VALORIZATION AND ITS BENEFITS

Literature, Places and Cultural Heritage

Literary works are treasures to preserve, starting from their inspiring places. Novels, short stories or poems can be strictly connected to place intangible cultural identity (Gu & Ryan, 2008), telling a lot of places, their stories, cultures, traditions, and landscapes (Campelo et al., 2013). Writers glean abundantly from this heritage and pour it in the pages of the book.

Literature works provide sorts of little portraits, able to fix, show, share, diffuse, and preserve local identities and heritage for next generations. So, preserving a place literary heritage means also preserving its cultural identity.

Place Identity and Tourism Promotion

Positive economic effects of tourism development are well known (see among others Ivanov & Webster, 2013). Tourism can support local economies development, generate income, sustain employment, and encourage entrepreneurship in satellite activities, like bed and breakfasts, cafes, arts and crafts manufacturing, and so on.

Literary tourism is not seasonal, but all-year long; it can be a day or a weekend local trip. Through tourism, place literary heritage preservation supports local development.

Destination management requires place differentiation. Literary heritage and related products are able to create some differentiation from similar locations. In most of the cases this means attracting an additional specific niche of tourists. But in case of very popular writers, masterpieces, popular movie adaptations (Iwashita, 2006), or appealing repeated events, these become real brand identifiers (Bolan & Williams, 2008; Hoppen et al., 2014), and local place managers are called to make decisions about how to valorize these opportunities in their destination marketing mix (Larson et al., 2013).

The case Forks is a prime example: the small town got a sudden and unexpected popularity, and related tourism increase, due to the popular Twilight saga, and local touristic operators were prompt to effectively valorize this opportunity. Local restaurants and cafes changed the name of their dishes according to the movie, a souvenir production and selling grew, as well as the organization of guided tours in town (Flood, 2009). An interview to a local member of the Chamber of Commerce was very eloquent: *“Two years ago we did not have a cash register or credit card terminal. Now our sales of anything that says ‘Forks’ have increased dramatically.”* (Flood, 2009, p.1). Other places, with different identities,

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