

Original Paper

Creativity in Urban Tourism District: A Case Study of South Kensington and Knightsbridge

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Received: August 9, 2023 Accepted: August 26, 2023 Online Published: September 13, 2023
doi:10.22158/sshr.v4n5p59 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/sshr.v4n5p59>

Abstract

This study is to explore creative tourism activities in urban districts. Through the analysis of several chosen places in South Kensington and Knightsbridge, in London, the creative tourism experience provided in these places was identified and their roles or specific features in attracting tourists were also discussed. The result of this study shows that South Kensington is a cultural and historic district, it offers tourists creative cultural and historical experiences. The Knightsbridge area is an entertainment and tourist shopping village district, the creative experience in this area has the main function of satisfying tourists' state of mind. This study also highlighted the significance of integrating creative activities into tourist attractions and according to tourists' demands to design the creative experience.

Keywords

creative tourism, tourism district, netnography, experience economy

1. Introduction

The aim of this essay is to explore creative tourism activities in urban districts. Through the analysis of several chosen places in South Kensington and Knightsbridge, in London, to identify the creative tourism experience provided in these places and their roles or specific features in attracting tourists. In this way to know how to design creative tourism experiences and have an understanding of factors influencing creative tourists' urban tourism destination choices. Based on the results of the study hope to provide suggestions for tourism managers to develop and manage creative tourism experiences in urban tourism districts to satisfy tourists' demands, foster their competitiveness, and have sustainable development.

This case study will be divided into four main parts. First, it will begin with a review of relative literature, which includes creative tourism, urban tourism districts and experience economy. Then, there will be an explanation of the research method, the netnography will be employed in this essay, followed by a brief introduction of research places and the reasons why selected these places. The third part of this paper is

an in-depth analysis of target places, the urban tourism district framework will be applied to classify the type of these districts, and according to the realms of experience framework and the real collected data, the creative experience in these districts will be examined and their functions will be discussed. In the final part, there will be a conclusion of research findings and will illustrate the effects of these creative tourism experiences on society, the economy, and city development, then give implications to the tourism industry.

Through the analysis, this research aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) What kind of tourist districts are South Kensington and Knightsbridge?
- 2) What creative experiences do they provide? And what functions do these experiences endow the districts in terms of urban tourism?
- 3) Why the South Kensington and Knightsbridge become attractive tourist areas in London? To be specific, the motives of tourists visiting these areas?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Creative Tourism

Creativity has been highly emphasized in several industries for a long time, not only in the cultural industry. As it is a tool to promote the development of the economy and society. The tourism industry also noticed this trend and incorporated it into industry practice.

As a subbranch of cultural tourism, creative tourism is defined as a kind of tourism that provide opportunities for tourists to actively engage with the local community to learn the culture, and new skills and explore their potential creativity (Remoaldo et al., 2022). It is identified by several key features, such as tourists' active participation, inspiration, knowledge acquisition, cultural exposure, and development. There are four carriers in creative tourism, namely creative people, creative process, creative products, and creative environment (Wang et al., 2020). For instance, the creative people construct the creative district or cluster and attract visitors, creative processes are used to design creative tourism practices to appeal to visitors' engagement.

The drivers of the appearance of creative tourism could be discussed from supply and demand perspectives. Regarding the supply side, the weakness of traditional tourism strategies promotes the development of the tourism industry in the creative direction. The standardization and McDonaldization of traditional mass tourism make it lose attractiveness for most tourists and relying solely on fixed models of presentation or inherited tangible heritage makes it develop at a slow pace. The problem of homogeneity and imitation of tourist attractions is serious, competition is fierce among destinations with similar types of tourism resources. However, creative tourism can overcome these deficiencies by offering innovative travel activities or products related to local culture and making the tourism destination more distinctive.

In addition, creative tourism products are more sustainable, it keeps refreshing their forms and regenerating new practices, which allows them to last for a long period. For example, holding annual

local cultural festivals (Richards, 2020). the interactive process in the creative tourism experience enhances visitors' perception of authenticity and genuineness. Through learning in the workshop or participating in local cultural events, visitors deeply contact with residents and have first-hand living experience, the linkage with the local community or citizens contributes to the true feeling of a journey (Richards & Marques, 2012). An increasing number of new creative entrepreneurs is also a pull factor for the progression of creative tourism, making it possible for tourists to probe diverse sectors during trips.

As for the demand side, the rise of creative tourism is influenced by emerging consumption trends. Contemporary consumption practices generally become a symbol of one's identity, taste, and lifestyle; a distinctive tourism experience helps to build one's self-image. When tourists are involved in a local life experience, they are taught knowledge about how the locals live, eat and so on, following specific lifestyles in a constructed creative environment. By participating in these culturally related activities, these travellers are given the identity of cultural tourists.

Also, there is a desire for self-development, and tourists are keen to learn new knowledge and develop personal skills through the tourism experience, this is defined as skilled consumption. For example, some rural places provide holiday activities for visitors to learn about life skills, like local gourmet cooking, painting and craft making (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

It is a new approach to indicating self-achievement and distinguishing themselves from others (Richards, 2011).

Today, tourists are eager for diversity and culturally rich experiences, creative tourism is able to satisfy the demands of different demographic visitors: for instance, well-educated people want to explore the heritage, the young generation is interested in the minority or new art styles, entertainment experience, social events, and so forth (Wang et al., 2020).

2.2 Four Realms of Experience

Affected by the development of the economy, the cultural tourism market needs to transfer from providing products or services to experience since it has become the main driver of tourism, destination should design creative experiences to build up uniqueness.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) pointed out that there are two dimensions of experience, namely level of participation and type of connection. Customers' participation in an experience can be passive which means their actions do not influence the experience. It also can be active, meaning that they are involved in creating an individual experience. The connection dimension refers to the participant's relationship with the experience. In an immersive experience, people physically or visually "dive in" the experience. Or people can absorb an experience, for instance when they are watching films at home. The two dimensions, categorize experience into four realms, including entertainment, educational, escapist and aesthetic.

In terms of entertainment experience, examples can be going to watch a performance. People are in a constructed setting and their activities do not affect the experience.

As for the educational experience, it requires participants to actively engage in the learning process, both physically, for instance, learning ski, and mentally, such as studying intellectual courses. It is a learner-centric process, students form their learning experience in an absorbing context. Yet, an educational experience also can be amusing, which may stimulate people's motivation to learn.

Regarding the esthetic experience, customers are surrounded by specific smells, sounds or lights which brings them an immersive sense. But they do not affect the activities in this environment. For example, when visiting a museum, visitors just watch the artefacts that are laid out in front of them. (Pine & Glimore, 1998).

In an escapist tourism experience, tourists are the creators of individual experience, this is similar to the educational experience, while the environment of this experience is more immersive. For example, when they have a trip to the amusement park.

Richards and Wilson (2006) also suggest ways to incorporate creativity into the travel experience. leveraging creative spectacles to attract tourists can be one of them. For example, visiting exhibitions is a way to enjoy creative spectacles. Creative space also plays a similar role, the dynamic feature of the creative space makes it possible to meet different demands, the Museum of Applied Arts in Frankfurt is an example, its function is to provide a space for visitors to communicate and obtain information, not just about seeing things. And creative tourism is a more interactive form, which requires tourists highly engage in a unique experience. Not only being a spectator or being in tourist places (Binkhorst, 2007). There is no conflict between these four kinds of experience. Indeed, a unique and meaningful tourism experience hybrid features all these realms. It should be a break from the usual daily routine and might be the first time for someone to do or learn something during travel or explore some new destinations. Most importantly, it is a co-creation process that needs both producer's effort to provide a rich and novel cultural experience and the consumers' interaction, and reflection.

2.3 Urban Tourism District

Cities have become popular destinations for a long time. In general, tourists visit a city for several reasons, such as viewing distinctive buildings or certain architecture, participating in festivals or megaevents and shopping. As a vital part of urban tourism, tourism districts refer to a unique area in the city, which is a cluster of tourism attractions and tourism facilities, for example, restaurants, monuments, museums and so on (Howard, 2010).

Normally, tourists are unfamiliar with the local area, and this might limit their exploration of the city. The strengths of the tourism district can deal with this problem, it has high visibility and is distinctive in the city. It provides activities or spaces that allow tourists to spend much time to stay there and achieve their goals of a trip. It has shared infrastructure or facilities, for instance, transportation, and parking area, which either benefit the tourists or the residents.

In Li, wang et al. (2020)'s study of a tourism district in Beijing, some factors determining tourist choice of going to a tourism district, include the cultural atmosphere in that community; physical elements in the districts, such as distinctive architectural style, public space, which can bring visitors a special sense

of the district; or surrounding facilities, well-developed destinations usually have a high level of accessibility; Special shops, for example, themed-souvenir stores could arise certain groups of people's interest (Li et al., 2020). Griffin and Hayllar (2009) mentioned that opportunities for visitors' consumption and a suitable mix of various activities draw visitors' attention, too.

Before analyzing the performance of the tourism districts, it is necessary to identify their types and functions. According to these basic descriptions grope the experience in the areas and how the nature of experience corresponds with the function of the districts. This research adapts Pearce's (2001) integrative framework of urban tourism and Graffin, et al. (2008)'s classification of urban tourism precincts to list the types of urban tourism districts and their role in the tourism sector. The tourism districts are categorised into nine categories. They include: historic or heritage districts which attract tourists through a compact clustering of heritage buildings, monuments, and public places. These components play a role in forming a specific sense or ambience of that area and then draw people's attention.

Ethnic districts are those areas that are associated with an ethnic group, they can raise some tourists' interest.

Sacred spaces that are distinctive districts can be found in pilgrimage cities.

Entertainment destinations are sites of consumption, concentrated entertainment-oriented retailers, high-tech entertainment centres, cinema complexes, and themed restaurants.

Recreational or tourism business district, which served as a place to mainly satisfy tourists' demands.

Tourist shopping village where a group of retail stores allows tourists to conduct consumption activities. The festival marketplace, Cultural District and Waterfront district are developed because of the reeration of specific city areas.

Concerning their functions, they can be divided into three aspects. The first is facilitating function. Districts can be used to support the basic needs of tourists, for instance, transportation, and also as landmarks to assist tourists to be easily found by others. Additionally, for those tourists on short-term trips, these districts make it possible for them to conduct effective and meaningful travel activities in a short period. The second one is the external or place connecting function, it serves to offer a sense of connection and authenticity of a destination. The tourism districts are usually a microcosm of a city, which brings together the important facets of the city.

Through the activities in these places, visitors understand the local people, historical background, lifestyle and city spirit. It is an area where tourists can experience the essential elements of the city, from their point of view, it makes the trip authentic and connects them with this city. The last one is the internal or state of mental function. One of the roles of tourism districts is to achieve visitors' psychological demands or change their minds during a trip. For example, their yearning for freedom, pleasure, curiosity, novel experience, and escape from normal daily routine. Tourism activities assist visitors to relax and temporarily escape from complexity or busyness, they want to treat themselves to pleasurable and relaxing tourism experiences. To a certain extent, the external and internal functions intersect. Not only tourists but some local people enjoy their leisure time in these places. They share the same mood with

tourists at this time and this shared experience and space will make tourists feel that they are linked together.

The success of some urban tourism districts has caused other cities to learn from and imitate the model, which leads to the emergence of homogeneous spots. However, an attractive tourism district cannot simply be a combination of tourism attractions or heritages, to be honest, it is the experience that makes the journey meaningful. Therefore, tourism districts should integrate its cultural connotation and attributes into the development of experience. This requires urban tourism districts to become a cluster that allows tourists to have the opportunity to learn about the life of residents, and the culture of the city or the nation, and relax with some recreational activities, to enjoy an exceptional, memorable and authentic tourism experience. Considering the significance of experience, this research is experience-oriented, it will focus on the creative experience in the urban district.

2.4 Previous Studies of Urban Tourism Districts

There are many research directions related to urban tourist districts. Edwards, Griffin and Hayllar (2008) examined Darling Harbor in Sydney from a city design and planning perspective. They concluded that the success of this waterfront district is because it leverages most attractions to hold local festivals and events. Besides, it has a lot of open spaces and outdoor revenues which also draw locals to this district to spend their weekends. Tourists indicated that by viewing the residents' activities in the district, they have a better understanding of Sydney's lifestyle, and thus set up a psychological connection with Sydney. Most recent studies have attempted to probe the relationship between tourist experience and urban districts. Maitland and Newman (2004) conducted research in Islington, which did not have historical heritage or distinctive attractions and was not a famous spot for most tourists. They found that this district has been a hot area for niche culture lovers. Several places in this district contribute to its distinctiveness, which makes tourists want to visit and engage in the activities happening in these places. For example, the Scala cinema was redecorated as a nightclub to attract particular tourists. Griffin and Hayllar (2009) applied phenomenology as a research method to examine tourists' experiences in two districts in Melbourne. They conducted interviews in these two districts and wanted to understand tourists' feelings and ideas about their visiting these places, and hence to evaluate the quality of the tourism experience and came up with factors that contribute to the appeal of the experience. Based on the result of the interview, they discussed visitors' perception from three themes, namely, physical form, atmosphere and meaning, and concluded that physical forms are an important element in creating an in-depth experience, the atmosphere generates people's emotional feeling of an experience which make a trip meaningful, and the meaning leads to the positive sense of the city. Wang et al. (2020) studied a tourism district called Tianzifang in Shanghai, they explored the influence of creative tourism experience on tourists' perception of authenticity and memorable. The quantitative research method was used in their study, Through the analysis of statistics collected from questionnaires, they conclude that activities such as pottery making, traditional artwork exhibitions and drama performances in Tianzifang facilitate the uniqueness of this district. Joining these practices allows tourists to experience the local culture and strengthen their

impression. In the process, they communicate with the locals and take learn lessons from them, which increases the authenticity of the practice.

3. Research Method

There are multiple methods to investigate the tourism experience, for instance, surveys, interviews, or observations. This research will use a qualitative research method, specifically a web ethnography or netnography. It is a kind of fieldwork conducted in the online environment (Zhang & Hitchcock, 2013) and is often used to analyze consumer behaviour, and the market environment and some researchers also use it to do tourism research. In netnographic research, data is collected from online channels such as websites, forums, and online communities. The form of the data is diverse and contains text, pictures, short films and so on (Volo, 2010). On the basis of the collected data, the researchers screened out the matching data and then conducted the content analysis. There are several advantages of this research method. First, it leverages technology to collect the data, which saves time and makes the process easier than real-life fieldwork. Second, the convenience of the search engine allows researchers to precisely find a large number of relevant topics by entering keywords. In addition, it broadens the range of sources of information, they can be drawn from different countries as well as fields, and the writer of the raw materials also has a different demographic background. This increases the complexity and creativity of the data that might help the researchers examine the research questions from new perspectives. Also, the content of online sources is stable, researchers save text or pictures and then conduct the research, which is more accurate than the interview. Because in the interview method, raw data needs to be translated, in this process, some contents may be lost or unclear, the translation sometimes can be wrong, etc. for the netnographic method, although the data needs to be interpreted as well, the raw material is fixed and can be presented to the readers in its original format. Last but not least, the released content is not like a structured interview or a questionnaire where the content is somehow elicited by the researcher's questions (Beaulieu, 2004). It expresses and reveals the authors' initial ideas, which are considered authentic. In this study, travel blogs will be used as research data. It is content that is shared by tourists and free for the public to read. It is worth evaluating tourists' blogs, it can be useful research sources to investigate the tourism experience. Since the blogs show tourists' perceptions, appreciation and reflection on their tourism experience. The shared experience and emotions become the source for other tourists to get information about the destination and affect their decision of future visiting.

Tourists' blogs will be collected from online websites. The data will be employed to evaluate tourists' attitudes and evaluation of the quality of the experience in South Kensington and Knightsbridge and the findings shed light on factors that influence their decision of urban tourism detonation.

3.1 Research Places and Reasons to Choose Them

The South Kensington and Knightsbridge districts are studied in this essay. There are three reasons to choose these two districts. On the one hand, this cluster is made up of rich tourism resources. Figure 1 shows some popular tourism attractions in London for example, The London Eye, Tower of London, Tate

modern, and so on. Different coloured icons represent different types of attractions, such as historical sites, parks, and galleries. It can be found that The South Kensington area and Knightsbridge area have a high number of attractions, and in terms of type, the attractions in this area are varied and concentrated compared to the scattered attractions in other places.

London attractions map

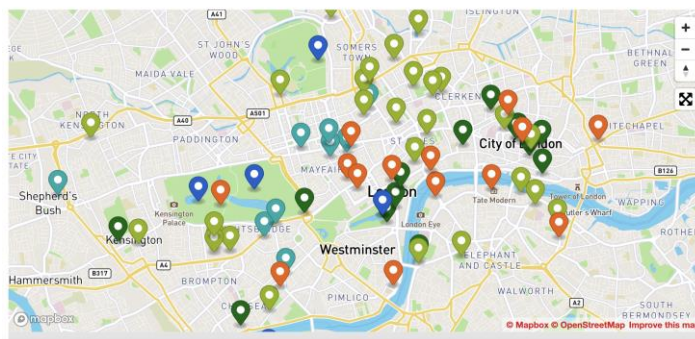


Figure 1. Top Attractions in London

Source: visitlondon.com

On the other hand, most of the attractions in these areas are rated as must-to-go places in London by official tourism websites like visitlondon.com, TimeOut.com and Tripadvisor.com, or they include must do some activities when coming to London. Therefore, these areas are attractive to most tourists, especially international tourists and play a significant role in London tourism.

Besides, despite that they are adjacent regions, each of them has its unique cultural characteristics, atmosphere, and symbolism, which make them function differently.

The boundaries of South Kensington are blurred, it is located in the north of Chelsea and the border with Hyde Park to the north and Gloucester Road to the west. It occupied about 87 acres and used to be an agricultural area until it was developed after the Great Exhibition was held in Hyde Park in 1851 (The American Hour, 2022). The developers wanted to develop the area as a place to promote art and science, hence the V&A museum, National science museum and Royal Albert Hall and other institutions of art and science were constructed. It is also because of these institutes that these areas are immersed in a strong artistic atmosphere, which appealing most tourists who are interested in cultural tourism. In history, many famous artists, writers, and other celebrities lived here, and now living here is also regarded as a symbol of identity and social status.

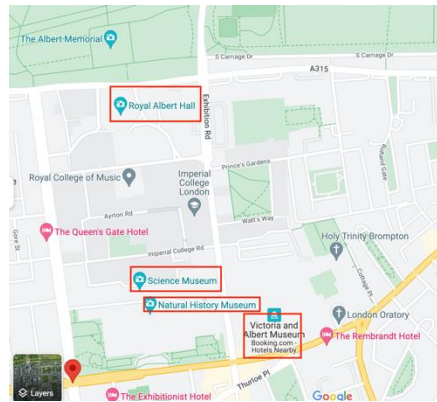


Figure 2. Important Places in South Kensington

Source: Google map

The Knightsbridge is located in the east of Kensington and north of Hyde Park. It is famous as London's upscale residential and world-class retail area. It is filled with luxury hotels and restaurants such as Bulgari Hotel, the Ritz London and Mandarin Oriental in which tourists can experience the traditional British afternoon tea service. It has luxury department stores, for example, Harrods, Harvey Nichols, and many designer shops which makes this area a paradise for shoppers. Most of the buildings in this area are Victorian mansions, which retain the appearance of the early 20th century or even before. The building of Harrods, for example, has a long history and can be regarded as a historic heritage. Some of the buildings here also have a modern style, the exquisite architecture also attracts visitors to take photos.

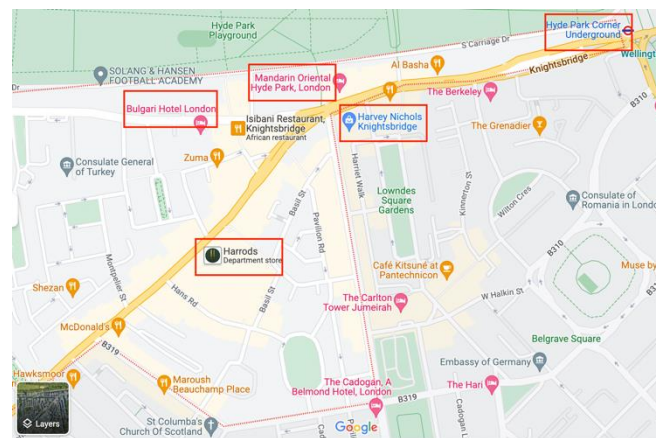


Figure 3. Important Places in Knightsbridge

Source: Google map

These two districts include lots of well-constructed amenities. The multiple restaurants can satisfy the tastes of global visitors. The transportation is convenient, these areas have several underground stations like Sloane Square Station on the Circle Line and South Kensington on the Piccadilly Line, which allows tourists to come or go to other places in London. The core attractions are very close to each other, visitors

can get from one site to another in a short time, and most of them are located on main roads such as Exhibition Road and Brompton Road, making it easy for visitors to find the places.

4. Data Collection and Discussion

The tourism marketing website Tripadvisor.com was selected to collect the raw data. 170 blogs were analyzed, they are all written in English and are the recent two years' content. The authors of these blogs are visitors from outside London, they come from cities in the UK such as Reading and foreign countries such as Singapore. The keywords: "South Kensington", and "Knightsbridge" are typed to search for the target data. After the first-round rough search, the selected sources are filtered again according to these principles. They are descriptions of experiences, show tourists' moods, evaluation of activities, and presentations of events. Then the data are used for conducting content analysis, the textual data are transferred into words for analysis.

The analysis will combine the urban tourism district framework and experience framework with the data collected from tourists, the functions of tourism experiences will be illustrated and the motives of tourists to these places will be examined.

Table 1. The Amount of Data

| District | Blogs |
|------------------|--|
| South Kensington | 120 (The Natural History Museum 40, The V&A museum 40, Hyde Park 40) |
| Knightsbridge | 50 |

4.1 South Kensington Area

The South Kensington area can be recognized as a combination of a cultural and historic district. It is surrounded by several cultural and historical attractions. There is a museum cluster here, which includes the Victoria and Albert Museum, the natural history museum and the Science Museum, not far from the museum is the Royal Albert Hall. In the north of this district are places that have historical heritages, for example, the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park. This essay will choose the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Natural History Museum and Hyde Park as cases to discuss which creative tourism experiences the South Kensington district offer and their roles.

Nowadays, the museum has become one of the most popular attractions in the urban tourism sector (van Aalst & Boogaarts, 2002). Its traditional functions include using heritage or artworks for education, preserving and presenting collections and conducting professional research. In order to reach broader guests its functions are more and more flexible. It can be representative creative spaces or tourism

destinations in the city. In the museum, people interact with others, learn something new, and join in heritage and cultural events. Some museums have business-related functions like selling souvenirs and providing café for leisure requirements.

The V&A Museum and Natural History Museum are located at the south end of Exhibition Road, and they are separated by the road. Therefore, it only takes about five minutes to walk from one museum to the other. The short distance allows those who have limited travel time can visit several museums in a certain period and makes the trip convenient and economy-friendly. There are also some famous restaurants, bars and cafes nearby, this tourism infrastructure supports the needs of tourists. Tourists come to the museum not just to learn and receive information, but also want to be enjoyable and relaxed. These recreational feelings can be acquired from social engagement during the experience, comfortable environment, challenges and so on.

The Natural History Museum offers an educational experience to satisfy tourists' learning and entertainment requirements. Through the visit to the museum, tourists enrich their knowledge, understand nature and achieve self-development and also link with the locals. The museum provides creative tourism experiences through innovative learning programs that need visitors' direct interactions. A quarter of bloggers have reflected on their participation in the creative programs and give positive comments on the form of teaching and involvement. For instance, in the volcano day workshop, visitors conduct hands-on experiments under the guidance of experts to imitate the eruption of the volcano. This kind of multisensory practice enriches the experience and humanizes and dilutes the boredom in the study process. The practical teaching process helps tourists to better explore and learn intellectual knowledge, making the experimental activities more impressive. One of the bloggers mentioned that during the learning process, she and her friend had a wonderful conversation beyond their usual level. Some blogs expressed that the experiment activities had a strong sense of reality. In these activities, they can challenge novel things that they have never done before, which makes the experience unique. This kind of educational experience contribute to both external and internal functions of tourism districts, for the external function, it makes visitors feel connected with the local, because the learning workshops there also have some local citizen or children, and the interactive activities provide tourists with opportunities to study and engage with them, and they may feel that they are doing the same things as local do. Also, the interaction between visitors and staff to some extent has a positive effect on their relationship with the museum. In some blogs, the service of the staff was mentioned, and visitors gave high marks and said it strengthened their impression of the experience. The unforgettable experience and service led to a next time potential next visit. As for the internal function, the interesting learning process enhances visitors' personal skills, and they receive mental pleasure.

As a world-famous art and design museum, The V&A museum serves to present exclusive and valuable crafts or hold contemporary artistic and cultural exhibitions. It has a large number of collections from all fields related to art, such as architecture, ceramics, textiles and photography. For visitors who have a relative professional background, going here might be the primary purpose of their visit to London. It

creates an escapist experience for guests through themed exhibitions, cultural events, and an immersive artistic world. In addition to the basic collections, it irregularly holds rich events with various themes, for example, retrospective exhibitions, spectacular installation art, and so forth. People can see rare and innovative things in these exhibitions, which makes the trip meaningful. In the collected blogs, the most repeated content is related to the different themed exhibitions. The diversity of the exhibitions caters to different people's specific interests and some of the bloggers indicated that they went to these exhibition due to their personal interest. For example, the Beatrix Potter exhibition might attract children and young generations' attention, and people who like fashion or costumes are willing to see the Africa Fashion exhibition (Victoria & Albert Museum, 2022). On some festivals, the museum host relative pop-up activities, for instance, during the Christmas season, there is a caroling every afternoon. In the collected blogs many tourists gave detailed descriptions of their experience, such as the exhibition they visit, the interior layout, other leisure activities they do in the museum, like drinking coffee or buying a souvenir and their appraisal. Besides, many of the authors emphasized that the museum is huge and shows a large collection of artworks, and it was impossible for them to see all of them at one time, so they will come to visit again since this museum is deserving their high evaluation and recommendation. The long paragraph also indicated that these exhibitions were rich in content and left them with a deep impression, therefore, they prefer to spend time writing about the experience and share with others. Not only the changing themes activities, but the furnishings of the space also show the creative facet of the V&A museum. The marble columns and human sculptures and other aesthetic physical objects contribute to the artistic atmosphere. Two blogs mentioned the relaxing and refreshing atmosphere in the museum. The visual image and changing light also create an immersive setting. The escapist experience plays a role in making visitors feel an escape from the ordinary world, immersing themselves in the art and design world. And here, tourists can meet and have a connection with those like-minded people. This museum could be considered a representative of London, through visiting here, they can feel the openness and diversity of London towards art.

| Sample content related to museums in South Kensington | |
|---|---|
| The Natural History Museum | <i>"The events were good fun and I'd say the event is well organized. The staff are very pleasant and helpful and my hat off to them for the work they do on what is probably for them quite a grueling event."</i> |
| | <i>"This place always has something new it seems. A real national treasure. So much to see; the earthquake scenario is also very realistic."</i> |
| The V&A | <i>"This by far is the best in my opinion. The museum is huge and lots to see."</i> |

| | |
|--------|--|
| Museum | <p><i>Particularly love the sculptures and Cast court the best. Very comprehensive and impressive collection. Highly recommended. “</i></p> <p><i>“Always on the top of our list when visiting London. The special exhibitions are always exceptional. Highly recommend you have a guide help you through the permanent exhibitions. This is a huge museum.”</i></p> |
|--------|--|

Urban parks are those public green spaces that allow anyone to access them. Although it is true that these places would not be the main reasons for people to select a tourist destination, Archer (2006) pointed out that it can be a pull factor for tourists to visit certain sites. The appropriate management of city parks contributes to the positive consequence of appealing to tourists, as they represent the image of the city. Therefore, their functions towards urban tourism could not be neglected. As early as the last century, one in five visitors to London’s royal parks was already made up of international tourists, it can be believed that the urban park is also one of the places people would stay during their trip. As one of the royal parks, Hyde Park is a hot place for locals to meet friends, walk the dog and do exercise, etc. From tourists’ point of view, visiting Hyde Park is a way to have a cultural tourism experience, since it has heritages, natural landscapes and leisure activities. The experience in Hyde Park can be classified as an escapist experience. Tourists are engaging in the creation of their tourism experience and actively join in the activities. Winter Wonderland is one of the most popular spots that were mentioned in the blogs. It is an outdoor amusement area situated in Hyde Park, which only opens in winter and allows either residents or tourists to come and play. When tourists visit Wonderland, the itinerary and activities are designed by themselves, they join in entertainment activities according to their interests, and thus they are highly involved. The park provides a special cultural setting for the visitors, such as Christmas-themed decorations and activities, and they are amid the happy seasonal ambience. Many bloggers use “magical” and “marvellous” to describe their experience in Wonderland. Along with the cultural experience, visitors can enjoy historical tourism experience. There are a number of monuments in the park, the visit to the Diana, Princess of Wales memorial is the most frequently mentioned monument in the collected data sources. Visitors can feel the spirit of the Princess and the grand Wellington Arch is also an iconic historic building. The enjoyment practices in the park allow visitors to temporarily be far away from the hustle and bustle of life and realize the purpose of entertainment through travel activities. A blog describes Hyde Park as an oasis that brings the visitor a peaceful feeling. Several people wrote that because the park is so big, for them a visit here is like a journey of discovery, full of the unknown, which is very meaningful. They can find different scenes in different spots. Additionally, the experience in Hyde Park forges a bond between London and tourists. It is established based on tourists’ perspectives of the places and the stories behind them. The specific heritages in the park become cues to arise visitors’ recall of history, even allowing

them to imagine classic situations that have happened in these places in the past and dream that they are in that moment. These cues will deeply root in their memory about this tourism destination. Also, can reinforce the authenticity of the experience because people's leisure activities can best show their real sides (Hayllar, Griffin, & Edwards, 2010), hence the real life of Londoners can be captured by tourists in the park, going for a walk, running in the park, feeding pigeons, these informal British daily activities foster tourists' authenticity feeling of travel.

Sample content related to Hyde Park

"Green oasis amidst the hustle and bustle of London"

"I've given it a 5-star rating for its beautiful green lawns and how restful it was to walk through."

"The famous speaker's corner near Marble Arch is always a popular sight for freedom of speech."

"Princess Diana, as is the splendid Princess Diana Memorial Fountain, a running water feature that is a beautiful and thoughtful tribute to the late Princess".

4.2 Knightsbridge Area

Regarding the Knightsbridge district, its main characteristics fit with the criteria of entertainment and tourist shopping village district, but also have a certain feature of a historic district. The luxury department store Harrods will be used as an example to illustrate the tourism experience in this area.

The exotic retailing space and a wide range of products offer tourists an esthetic experience in Harrods. The stylish consumption environment shows the creativity of Harrods. The inner and outside design of Harrods puts visitors in a fascinating world. The inner decoration combines Egyptian elements with modern style. In the hall, there is a replica of the Egyptian Sphinx, which is a symbolic statue that most visitors to Harrods must photograph. The ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics are carved on the walls and the Egyptian style frescoes displaying on the stone columns, visitors are transported to an immersive Egyptian shopping environment. A blogger wrote that the hybrid of light, sound and sight makes her feel like in another world. The exterior building often attracts the attention of passers-by with flash and brilliant light. For example, recently its exterior was decorated in the style of gingerbread man's house to promote DIOR's activities. It has different kinds of services, not just selling costumes, and make-up, but offers afternoon tea service and has salons, it also contains almost all prestigious luxury brands. All these elements make a large group of tourists keen to visit. One in five bloggers said Harrods was an icon of London because of its historic architecture or its wide range of services, the exterior building has over 160 years of history, and some blog authors wrote that they visit Harrods also for its inherited historical significance.

The primary function of the experience in Harrods is the internal function. The experience in this place caters to their demand for hedonism, such as shopping for luxury goods or enjoying exquisite and delicate and authentic British afternoon tea. The extraordinary interior setting creates a sense of difference from the real world, which makes them feel that they are having a holiday. Four people use “treat” to describe their experience in Harrods and said that they went there as a reward for themselves.

Sample content related to Harrods

“my sister and I recently had afternoon tea at Harrods. After loosing our lovely mum in August this year we decided to celebrate what would have been her 80th birthday with afternoon tea.

Totally amazing”

“It’s busy, hectic and like a maze but for fabulousness, history and uniqueness nothing beats Harrods.”

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

To sum up, this essay addressed the three research questions. In terms of the category and functions of these two districts, South Kensington is a cultural and historic district, it offers tourists creative cultural and historical experiences, for example, the realistic experiment program in the Natural History Museum and the avant-garde exhibitions in the V&A Museum. These educational or escapist tourism experiences make the district have both the role of connecting the local and self-satisfaction. Hyde Park serves to provide activities that allow tourists to relax and experience the lifestyle of Londoners. These activities have the external and internal functions of the tourism district as well. The Knightsbridge area is an entertainment and tourist shopping village district, the creative experience in Harrods is constructed through the immersive environment and multiple services and it makes the district have the main function of satisfying tourists’ state of mind.

With respect to the factors that stimulate tourists’ visiting, they can be categorized into three aspects, quality of experience, service and interest. The results of collected blogs about South Kensington demonstrate that most visitors went to this area for innovative cultural learning or experiencing activities, and the high-quality service makes them willing to come again. Additionally, since the research focus of the museums in this area is heterogeneous, therefore, people choose to visit different them according to personal interests. Factors that drive visitors to Knightsbridge are related to their keenness to have rest. The delicate and comfortable environment reduces fatigue and leaves a positive impression on tourists. A large number of designers and luxury stores have a strong appeal to those who are interested in fashion or luxury, shopping and consumption might be the prior motive to visit this district.

Regarding the tourism industry, the creative tourism experience helps to promote heritage in the districts. It is an approach to reviving city districts, making some neglected places more distinctive and attractive, and facilitating regional development and city branding. For the social and economic side, the

reinforcement of attractiveness leads to the acquirement and retention of tourists, even businesses, for some countries, creative tourism increases the national revenue and to a certain extent solves the problem of poverty. It provides more career opportunities for citizens, and the creative class forms a part of domestic entrepreneurs.

For tourism managers and decision-makers, it is necessary to integrate creative activities into the tourism attractions and based on the investigation of tourists' requirements design the creative experience, since a creative tourism experience needs a high level of co-creation. In addition, they should emphasise the importance of creativity to the industry practitioners and provide financial support or sources to encourage the creation of new forms of tourism practices and enact some favourable policies to attract the creative class to the tourism districts.

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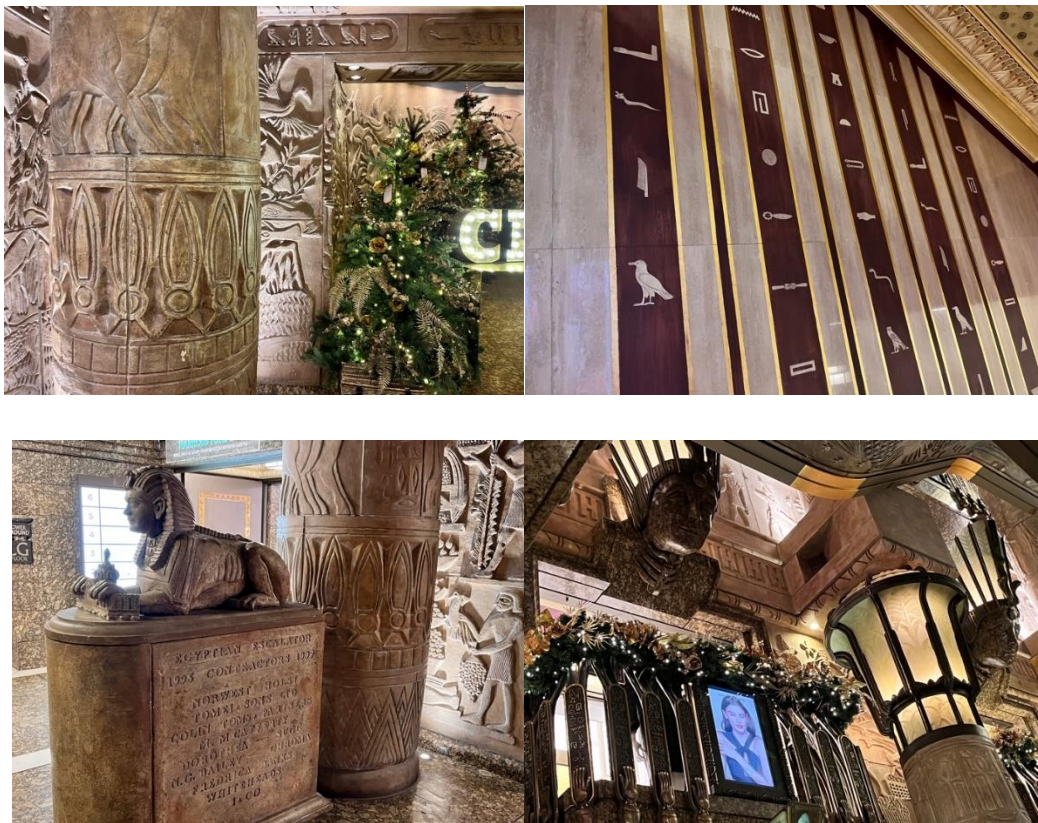
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Appendix:



Picture 1. The Nature Scene in Hyde Park



Picture 2. The Interior Design of Harrods



Picture 3. The Exterior Design of Harrods