# Cultural Memory and Travel Writing: An Analytical Study of Literature as a Medium of Experiencing Tourism

**Dr. Sunil Hardasbhai. Der[1*], Dr Abinash Mohapatra[2], Dr. Mohd Azam[3], Dr. Devika S[4], Dr. Dinky Mishra[5], Dr. Tridib Kr. Goswami[6], Dr Khamar Jahan Sk[7]**

[1*]Associate Professor, Department of English, School of Arts and Humanities, English Literature, English Language Teaching, Dr. Subhash University Junagadh Gujarat India 362001, Email ID: sunil.der@dsuni.ac.in, ORCID ID: 0009-0007-1598-1007

[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, School of Arts, Specialization: Environmental Humanities, Memory and Trauma Studies, Manipal University Jaipur, Jaipur - 303 007, Rajasthan, India, E-mail ID: abinash.mohapatra@jaipur.manipal.edu, ORCID ID: 0009-0002-4263-272X

[3]Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration, Specialization - Marketing College Name -Kanpur institute of technology, AKTU, Email ID: mohd.azam@kit.ac.in, ORCID ID:0000-0001-9598-8047

[4]Assistant Professor, Department of General Management, Specialization: ELT, Literature, SCMS Cochin School of Business, Kochi, Email ID: devika@scmsgroup.org, Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8981-3400?lang=en

[5]Assistant professor, Department of Geography, Specialization: Fluvial geomorphology and cultural studies, Nagaon University, Nagaon, Assam, Email ID: dinkymishra@gmail.com, Orcid ID: https://orchid.org/0000-0002-7964-7100

[6]Associate Professor, English, Batadraba Sri Sri Sankaradev College Nagaon, Assam, India, Email ID: tridibgoswami7@gmail.com, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7115-3541

[7]Assistant Professor, Department of English, VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad, E-mail ID: kjshaik@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0009-0005-0739-5812

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**ABSTRACT:**

The cultural and tourism scholarship has a crucial place in the travel writing because it is a medium of retelling and passing memory and identity, and experiential meaning. In the light of the growing role of cultural memory in determining how people derive meaning upon places of interest, literary narratives provide good insights into the symbolic, emotional, and historical aspects of tourism experiences. This paper has discussed how travel writing shapes and enacts cultural memory and how it acts in describing and reporting tourism experiences. It sought to examine the narrative processes involved in meditating the cultural knowledge, affect and negotiating the identity in literature. This study used a qualitative analytic research design, which was based on cultural studies and narrative research. Purposive corpus of published travel reports was sampled out on basis of thematic relevance, cultural richness and richness in description. Results showed that cultural memory was a core narrative base, which was manifested in the historical memory, landscape memory, rituals, and generational memory. Another way in which travel writing builds tourism experiences is through an emotional depth, sensory immersion, reflective interpretation and selective interactions with local communities. Also, identity had been faced based on the experiences in symbolic spaces and emotionally charged spaces, which shows how the cultural meaning and self-perception in the travel narratives are relational. The paper will illustrate that travel

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writing is a culturally inherent system that influences the manner in which places, experiences, and identities are perceived to be comprehended. These implications are useful in cultural tourism, literary studies, and memory studies as they reflect that literature can mediate cultural description and experience..

Keywords: Cultural memory, travel writing, tourism experience, narrative representation, identity negotiation.

## Introduction

The connection between culture, memory and travel has traditionally influenced how people understand places, how they form personal experiences and how they pass on shared meanings. With the ever more interconnected societies brought about by globalisation, the cultural memory, which can be defined as the rest of the recollection of historical and social experiences embedded within communities, becomes particularly relevant in terms of how the travellers will interact with the destinations and the stories attached to them (Ahmad and Hertzog, 2016). Tourism is not just an economic practice, but a process through cultural movement people negotiate identity, place and history. Here, literature, particularly the travel writing, is a platform through which travellers express and maintain the meanings that they attached to landscapes, people, and cultural practices. Tourism research is becoming more aware of the importance of memory in the formation of visitor experience, especially in how recollections are stored, preserved, and passed on in the form of narratives (Farmaki, 2021). The idea of the memorable tourism experience has grown over the past decades, focusing on the role of emotions, thoughts, and cognitive involvement in the tourism consumption (Hosany et al., 2022). Hospitality and tourism research identifies memory as a key element in determining the significance and life-altering nature of travel and researchers have examined how travellers form memories of their journeys in the form of autobiographical memory (Jorgenson et al., 2019) and how these memories become vivid and long-lasting memories (Kim et al., 2022). This is in the light of developments that imply the value of literature, which captures the emotional richness, narrative, and contemplative context, as a critical tool to comprehend the experience and memory of tourism.

Narrative representation is closely connected to cultural memory which enables communities to signify their histories, values and social meanings in communication forms. Specifically, travel writing is a type of cultural artefact in which the intersection of personal experience and collective identity is recorded (Seixo, 2021). Travel writers are involved in the construction and passing of cultural memory between generations through landscapes, experiences with people and thoughts about cultural practices. According to scholars, travel narratives have an interpretive power because they document and construct cultural perceptions of place in equal measure (Clarke, 2018). In this way, they add to the creation of memories, as they present formats with the help of which the readers visualize and recollect destinations (Marschall, 2016). The literary stories also play a role in the manner the readers conceptualise the foreign environments particularly the visual and sensory elements inherent in the descriptive writing. The visual reading process in the context of travel literature emphasises how the travellers perceive the cultural representations and geographic attributes (Alu and Hill, 2018). Such interpretations tend to go beyond the page and impact the manner of how future tourists will view destinations, form expectations and determine how they seek meaningful experiences. Moreover, literature tends to reveal the emotional and contemplative aspects of traveling in the manner that can be

perceived by readers as reflective of the processes of forming memories in readers (Servidio and Ruffolo, 2016). The imaginative experience creates mental tours in the readers that accompany physical travel, which strengthens the significance of literature as an indirect instrument of tourism experience (Reijnders, 2016). The fact that the literary tourism has become the focus of the research area emphasizes the increased scholarly attention devoted to studying the connection between literature and the cultural heritage. Based on research, it is emphasized that readers travel to places related to authors, fictional characters, or travel literature to associate with the stories they have read (Cevik, 2020). Examples of such visits represent how literature is used as a memory site, through which they are able to interact with the cultural and historical meanings beyond the consumption of the text itself. Literary tourism is thus a cultural and experiential phenomenon uniting lived experiences with the story that circulates in the society (MacLeod et al., 2018).

Travel writing is a special place in the cultural and historical literature because it records the view of travellers about societies, places and cultural experiences. These narratives record specific events in the past, textual documents of social transformation, political conflicts, and changing cultural identities (Carson et al., 2017). Accordingly, travel writing acts as a historical document and also as a commentary about culture today. It has dual character and provides understanding on how travellers perceive and express cultural difference, and adds to the wider discourse in cultural studies and social sciences (Polezzi, 2016). Travel writing is also considered by researchers in the tourism area as one of the types of embodied experience associated with the sensory, emotional, and cognitive aspects of traveling (Jiang and Yu, 2020). Authors unleash their experiences with the locations into a form of stories that incorporate personal decoding with cultural gazing, which predetermines how readers perceive and visualize the destinations. Such writings speak of how cultural memory comes to life, is negotiated and re-constructed in the process of travel. Travel writing usually captures changes to the self where travellers struggle with new cultures, geography, and histories (McWha et al., 2018). It is in these experiences that writers are able to capture not just the outer space but also the inner transformation, making travel an act not only of culture, but also of existence.

Travel narratives have also increased their coverage and their influence in culture due to digital platforms and new formats of stories. Modern travellers are increasingly moving towards online forms of travel writing, including blogs and interactive storytelling platforms that give rise to new ways of transmitting cultural and preserving memories (Mansfield and Potocnik Topler, 2021). These online stories serve as supplements to the existing literary practices, which add to the changing nature of cultural tourism and related memory practices. Tourism researchers underline that the cultural interpretation of expectations, experiences and reflective narrative interactions between the traveller and their expectation create the memorable (de et al., 2018; Hosseini et al., 2023). A reflective and interpretive genre, travel writing, can therefore provide an excellent perspective on how cultural memory shapes the experiences of tourism. Through the use of literature discourses, scholars are able to reveal how stories form the cultural identity, as well as shape tourist behaviours, as well as help to explain more about place, history and lived experience in the context of a wider knowledge.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To analyse the way in which travel writing constructs and conveys cultural memory, shaping readers' interpretations of place, history, and lived experiences.

2. To examine the role of literary narratives as a medium through which tourism experiences remain represented, interpreted, and culturally transmitted.

**Materials and Methods**

*Research Design*

The analysis research design that was applied in this study has been the interpretation of literary texts as culture. It was based on cultural research and on the humanities mode of inquiry and thus enabled a thorough study on how the cultural memory was enshrined and manifested in the travel literature. The method helped the researcher to examine symbolic meaning, story lines and experiential levels in chosen texts. The research design also helped in the interpretive analysis as opposed to numerical measurements, which was in line with the objective of the study of understanding the manner in which literature mediated the tourism experience. This qualitative framework gave the focus of the study to interpretation, contextualization and reflective involvement in cultural narratives.

*Corpus Selection and Criteria*

The corpus was composed of published texts of travel writing representing various cultural settings, historical events, and styles of writing. The texts were chosen depending on their thematic representation of the cultural memory, descriptive richness of the travel experiences, and their acknowledgement in the literary or academic circles. The use of reflective commentary, cultural interpretation and the personal narrative element were also taken into consideration in the selection process. Only the English texts that can be found in print or online version were incorporated in order to present consistency in analysis. This purposive sample design also made sure that all the sampled works added value to the study of how the travel literature mediated culture experience and tourism experience.

*Analytical Framework*

It used an analytical framework based on the cultural memory theory, narrative analysis, and interpretive textual analysis. The cultural memory theory informed the analysis of how collective pasts, identities, and symbols of cultural were reflected in the travel works. Narrative analysis facilitated the recognition of storytelling patterns, thematic organization and authorship views that influenced place and experience interpretation. Also, close reading of description passages, expression of emotions and references to symbols was supported by interpretive textual analysis. Combined, they enabled the researcher to find more profound cultural meaning behind the texts, as well as to see how the process of literary representation formed the perceptions of tourism and cultural identity.

*Data Collection and Interpretation Procedures*

The data were gathered using systematic reading, annotation and extraction of the appropriate narrative parts to each selected text. Major themes based on cultural memory, place description and tourism experience descriptions were observed and divided. Interpretive coding was used to extract patterns, symbolic themes and cultural allusions that recurred. The focus on meaning-making and not quantification was made in the analysis, and thematic links were formed naturally through the texts. Interpretive processes were recursive in that they entailed re-reading in order to develop more insights and to confirm the consistency of the themes. This procedure made sure that the interpretations were not loose and were based on the textual evidence, but were also influenced by the more general cultural and theoretical outlook.

*Data Analysis*

Thematic coding and interpretive reading of the chosen travel accounts were used to perform the data analysis process. The passages that were extracted were categorised into thematic groups which demonstrated cultural memory, experience representation and interpretation of the narration. The themes were analysed and patterns, symbols and cultural meanings of the texts were identified in each theme. Cross-textual comparisons were made in order to find similarities and differences in how the authors described tourism experiences. Cultural memory theory was also incorporated in the analysis to enhance the comprehension of the structure of narratives. This methodology guaranteed the fact that textual evidence was involved in making the findings and it was relevant to the study analysis framework.

## Results

*Cultural Memory Narratives in Travel Writing*

The cultural memory theme analysis showed that there were significant differences in the theme occurrence within the corpus. The frequency of the codes was the highest in the Historical Reminiscence with 42 incidences which reflects the high involvement in the past events as indicated in Table 1. Place-based cultural meaning was highlighted with Memory-Embedded Landscapes coming in its heels with 39 coded segments. Cultural Rituals and Traditions emerged 28 times, which means that the practice of communal practices was moderately represented. Ancestral or Generational Memory the manner in which the lowest frequency of 21 occurrences, as of yet, still added some significance to the cultural memory structure. The values of code density were between 3.5 to 7.0, intensity between 3.9 to 4.8 and text coverage between 9.6 percent to 18.3 percent.

***Table 1 Cultural Memory Coding Matrix Across the Corpus (n = 6)***

| Theme | Code Frequency | Code Density | Intensity Score | Text Coverage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Historical Reminiscence | 42 | 7.0 | 4.8 | 18.3 |
| Cultural Rituals/Traditions | 28 | 4.7 | 4.1 | 12.5 |
| Memory-Embedded Landscapes | 39 | 6.5 | 4.6 | 17.1 |
| Ancestral/Generational Memory | 21 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 9.6 |

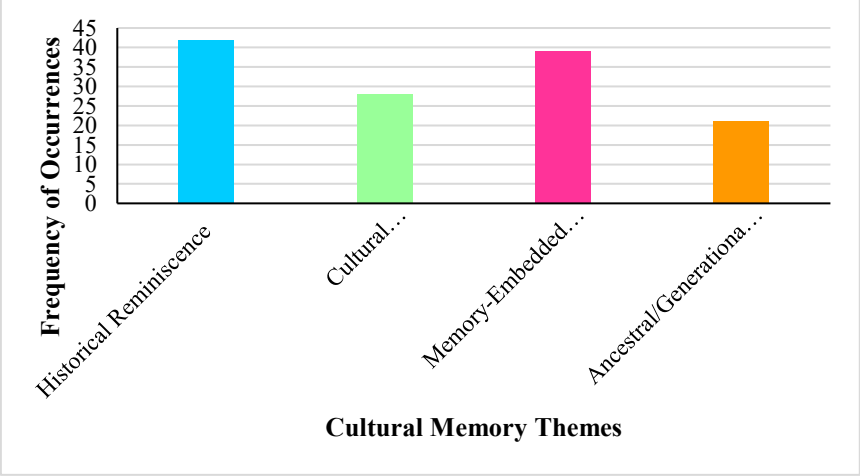


***Figure 1. Distribution of Cultural Memory Themes in Travel Narratives***

The distribution of the key themes of cultural memory is determined in the travel texts under investigation. It described how the individual themes stayed with different intensities, according to the different ways authors approached cultural history, rituals, landscapes and generational memory as presented in Figure 1. The visualisation denoted which themes were more prominent in the narratives and which were less prominent in the narratives. The presence of such thematic patterns in the figure justified the conclusion that cultural memory was a vital

contributor to the development of narrative framework and experience of travel writing. On the whole, the figure complemented the qualitative insights made after the analysis.

Literary Representations of Tourist Experience

The constructions of the analysis of tourist experience form the fact that Emotional Response was the most frequent with 51 occurrences, as its primary contribution to narrative richness. Sensory Engagement was followed by 47 coded passages; this implies that there was a lot of multisensory representation in the texts, as was recorded in Table 2. The number of times Reflective Interpretation was found was 34, which proves a clear presence of reflective remark, and Encounter with Locals registered 26 times, the least among the constructs. The scores based on Intensity had a value between 4.0-5.0 with the highest value of 5 being Emotional Response. The range of average depth rating was 3.8 to 4.8, as well as narrative presence was raised to 23.0 percent as compared to 11.7 percent, representing a difference in the emphasis of experience.

***Table 2 Tourist Experience Construct Scores Derived from Coded Narratives***

| Construct | Frequency | Intensity Score | Average Depth Rating | Narrative Presence (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sensory Engagement | 47 | 4.9 | 4.6 | 21.4 |
| Emotional Response | 51 | 5.0 | 4.8 | 23.0 |
| Reflective Interpretation | 34 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 15.8 |
| Encounter With Locals | 26 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 11.7 |

Intersections of Culture, Space, and Identity

The cultural-space-identity intersections the manner in which that Symbolic Spaces had the highest number of code frequency (45) indicating their central position in the creation of the cultural meaning expressed in Table 3. Spatial Emotion and Memory was next with 37 coded segments, which had high levels of emotional attachment to place. Cultural Hybridity was used 33 times which means that there were many instances of personal and local identity blending unlike Negotiated Identity which was used at 29 times. The indices of co-occurrence were in the range of 0.65 to 0.92 with the Symbolic Spaces, being the means of the most strong relational appearance. The scores of intensity varied between 4.2 and 4.7 and the contribution to the corpus was between 12.6 and 20.1.

***Table 3 Culture–Space–Identity Intersection Metrics***

| Intersection Type | Code Frequency | Co-occurrence Index | Intensity Score | Contribution to Corpus (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cultural Hybridity | 33 | 0.78 | 4.5 | 14.9 |
| Symbolic Spaces | 45 | 0.92 | 4.7 | 20.1 |
| Negotiated Identity | 29 | 0.65 | 4.2 | 12.6 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spatial Emotion/Memory | 37 | 0.83 | 4.6 | 16.5 |

**Discussion**

The results showed that the cultural memory was used as a background narrative tool all through the travel texts. These thematic patterns provided in Table 1 and Figure 1 are evident in how that cultural memory provided core narrative basis across the travel texts. The most dominant were Historical Reminiscence and Memory-Embedded Landscapes, which meant that authors treated destinations as culturally stratified spaces, which are complexes of past events and symbolic meanings. The slightly stronger or weaker manifestations of rituals, traditions, and generational memory added significant depth to the formulation of the present observation because it provides the connection between the current observation and the cultural experiences of the past. In these allocations, Table 1 was able to show that travel writing was not merely a depiction of places as physical sites but rather as cultural relics that were laced with collective memory. Figure 1 also supported the different focus that was given to memory themes in different narratives. The findings reveal how Table 2 illustrates that literature influenced the experiences of tourism based on emotional depth, immersion of senses and reflective interaction. Emotional Response became one of the main narratives that gave the readers vivid imaginaries of cultural settings through description of senses. Reflective Interpretation added an inquiring dimension as it depicted how the authors mediated their experiences when they were placed in the wider cultural frameworks. Contacts with inhabitants, which were less common, increased the degree of authenticity to the plot. All these constructs in Table 2 indicated that travel writing reduced tourism into a multifaceted experience seeking process that is informed by emotion, perception, and meaning-making. The Table 3 results showed that identity was never fixed but negotiated in the process of going through culturally meaningful spaces. The prevalence of the Symbolic Spaces was used to demonstrate their use in stimulating cultural thought, and the Spatial Memory and Emotion were used to point out how specific places were emotionally subtextual. Cultural Hybridity and Negotiated Identity suggested that writers tended to re-evaluate their cultural viewings in reaction to new surroundings. Together, the patterns in Table 3 indicated that the identity formation was represented in travel writing as a constantly shifting process that is influenced by contact with cultural space and emotionally evocative locations.

Results obtained in this paper are in close connection with the previous literature that underlines the role of memory, emotion, and authenticity as core elements of cultural tourism experience. The previous literature has shown that cultural memory adds a drastic symbolic and experiential richness to the travel experience as visitors connect with the remaining histories and shared stories (Seyfi et al., 2020). These concepts seem to be also reflected in the research on how that literary narratives contribute to spiritual and genuine involvement that enhances emotional ties of travellers to destinations (Shirmohammadi and Hashemi Baghi, 2021). The focus on emotional and sensory aspects that are evident in the findings aligns with other studies that demonstrate that affective and sensory stimuli have a significant impact on the creation of memorable tourism experiences (Stone et al., 2022). Further, the place interpretation formed by memory agrees with the frameworks that focus on memory management in tourism experiences (Tung et al., 2017). The relational relations between identity and place are also based on the results of how cultural landscapes evoke self-reflection and cultural reinterpretation (Trdina and Pusnik, 2023).

The findings also brought out the impact that travel writing had on tourism experiences in emotional, sensory and reflective aspects. The

Emotional Response became a significant construct of the narration as it implied that the authors described travel as an emotional experience that bridged individual emotion and the cultural background. Sensory Engagement was a contribution to the elements of immersion that enabled the reader to envision the textures, sounds and even the atmosphere of the destinations described. The added interpretive layer, which was provided by Reflective Interpretation, was how travel writing induced internal discourse and meaning-making. Meetings with locals, though not as frequently, provided reality, making the stories based on social communication and cultural exchange. Combined, these elements showed that travel writing created a highly experiential and cultural mediated process of tourism.

Cultural memory too was also found as a guiding frame though which place was understood in the narratives. Historical Reminiscence and Memory-Embedded Landscapes informed how authors created the cultural meaning of places focusing on how the past and symbolic places influenced the way contemporary places were perceived. The fact that there were rituals, traditions, and a memory of the ancestors meant that the place was represented as a culture that was constantly developing with inherited practices that still defined meaning. These narration forms showed that cultural memory brought coherence and thematic integrity, which made place a meeting point of cultural identity and historical continuity and experience. The texts therefore depicted that place was not experienced as an uninscribed geographical setting but as a culturally-inscribed one.

The findings also showed that identity was constructed and reconstructed whenever one had an experience with symbolic spaces and emotionally intense environments. The symbolic Spaces were very powerful in terms of their narrative power, implying that culturally meaningful places were the points of self-reflection. Spatial Emotion and Memory showed that emotional attachment to place informed the manner within which writers constructed cultural environments and how emotion was also critical to identity formation. The existence of Cultural Hybridity and Negotiated Identity was an indication that authors often re-evaluated their cultural self-understanding regarding the experiences they were engaged with as an indication of the fact that identity formation was dynamic and interactional in the context of the travel experience.

**Conclusion**

This paper has shown that travel writing is a strong cultural medium where memory, experience, and identity are still interpreted, reconstructed and transmitted. As the analysis has shown, cultural memory was the main narrative backbone throughout the corpus, and the authors extensively resorted to the historical memory, associations with the landscapes, rituals, and generational stories to contextualize their experience of place. Through these representations that were memory-driven, travel writing represented destinations which become culturally-charged spaces by intersecting the past with the present. No less important was the fact that emotional, sensory, and reflective areas also played a crucial part in the construction of the narrative tourism experiences. This is how travel writing can promote the viewer to experience destinations beyond the intellectual into the physical and experience an extended imaginative relationship to the cultural settings. The paper has also shown how identity was negotiated in the process of working with symbolic space and emotionally resonant landscapes. Cultural hybridity, negotiated identity, and spatial emotion themes revealed that travel narratives usually challenged the authors to reconsider their cultural status, and consequently allowed them to unveil the identity as a process of movement and interaction driven by space and memory. The findings have the contribution in the cultural studies, tourism literature, and narrative inquiry in the way they highlight the interpretative richness that literary texts accord to the interpretation of cultural experience. Future studies ought to be conducted on a larger geographic corpus, comparative cultural

backgrounds, interdisciplinary connections between travel writing, interpretation of heritage, and lived religious or philosophical experience. The enquiry would add to the available knowledge in understanding how literature still mediates cultural identity and tourism in the increasingly global world.

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