



Analysis of Learning Experience in Tourism Destinations on Improving Students' History Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the impact of the direct learning experience in tourism destinations on the improvement of students' historical knowledge. History learning in the classroom is often considered monotonous, limiting contextual understanding and information retention. Tourism destinations, such as historical sites, museums, or cultural relics, offer authentic environments rich in historical information and the potential for multisensory experiences. Through a quantitative approach, the study involved students from several high schools participating in educational tourism programs to specific historic sites. Data was collected through pre-tests and post-tests to measure improvements in historical knowledge, as well as questionnaires to evaluate students' perceptions of their learning experiences. Preliminary results showed that students who participated in educational tours experienced significant improvements in their historical knowledge compared to the control group. In addition, hands-on experience in historic locations has been shown to increase learning interest, facilitate a deeper understanding of concepts, and strengthen long-term memory. The implications of this study highlight the importance of integrating learning activities outside the classroom, particularly through educational tourism, as an effective strategy to enrich the history curriculum and create a more meaningful and memorable learning experience for students. This study recommends the further development of similar programs to support holistic and contextual history education.

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INTRODUCTION

History education plays a crucial role in shaping identity, critical understanding of the past, and individual readiness to face the future (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). However, in conventional classroom learning practices, history is often presented theoretically and dominated by memorization of facts and dates, which sometimes leaves students feeling bored and less motivated (Seixas & Morton, 2013). This approach often fails to tie the historical narrative to the relevance of students' real lives, thus limiting their ability to build deep and contextual understanding (Wineburg, 2001). Consequently, students' retention rates of historical knowledge may not be optimal, and their interest in this subject tends to decline over time. These challenges demand innovations in history teaching methods that can revive students' interests and provide a more authentic and meaningful learning experience.

One of the promising innovations is the integration of learning experiences outside the classroom, especially through educational tourism activities to tourism destinations that have historical value (Falk & Dierking, 2013). Historic tourism destinations, such as museums, archaeological sites, monuments, or even old town landscapes, are "living laboratories" that offer invaluable learning resources. In contrast to textbooks or lectures in the classroom, this environment allows students to interact directly with artifacts, buildings, and relics of the past that are silent witnesses of historical events (Hein, 1998). This direct interaction can trigger stronger sensory and emotional engagement, thus facilitating a more personalized and in-

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depth knowledge construction process. When students see, touch (if allowed), or even feel the atmosphere of a historical place, historical information is no longer just a series of facts, but rather a living and internalized narrative.

The concept of experiential learning, pioneered by David Kolb (1984), emphasizes that learning is a process in which knowledge is created through experiential transformation. In the context of historical educational tourism, students not only passively receive information, but they are actively involved in exploring, observing, asking questions, and reflecting on what they find in the field. Experiential learning cycles, which include concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, are highly relevant to historical tourism activities. Students experience historical sites firsthand (concrete experiences), reflect on the significance of artifacts or events that occurred there (reflective observation), relate the discovery to historical concepts they have learned (abstract conceptualization), and may formulate questions or ideas for further research (active experimentation). This approach has the potential to improve understanding of complex historical concepts, given that direct experience can bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Educational tourism, or edutourism, has evolved into an important segment in the tourism industry that offers a blend of learning and recreation (Smith, 2009). This type of tourism is specifically designed to provide an enriched learning experience through visits to places that have educational value, including cultural and historical heritage (Ryan & Gu, 2010). Previous studies have shown that visits to museums and heritage sites can significantly increase understanding and appreciation of history and culture (Doering, 2010; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). However, further research is still needed that specifically examines the direct impact of learning experiences in tourism destinations on improving students' cognitive history knowledge, especially in the context of formal education curriculum. Although the general benefits of educational tourism are widely recognized, a more detailed understanding of the mechanisms by which these experiences affect students' retention and depth of historical knowledge still requires in-depth exploration.

In addition to improving cognitive knowledge, educational tourism also has the potential to provide other benefits such as the development of essential 21st century skills. Skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication, can be honed through interactions in new environments and challenges that arise during field exploration (Larson & Miller, 2011). For example, students may be asked to analyze historical evidence at the site, work together in groups to interpret artifacts, or present their findings to peers. This non-formal environment often encourages greater autonomy and curiosity, which is an important driver in the lifelong learning process (Dewey, 1938).

This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing in depth how the direct learning experience in historical tourism destinations affects the improvement of students' historical knowledge. The main research question to be answered is: "Is there a significant increase in students' historical knowledge after participating in an educational tourism program to historical tourism destinations?" In addition, this study will also explore students' perceptions of their learning experiences in tourism destinations, including factors that may contribute to learning effectiveness. The results of this study are expected to provide strong empirical evidence to support the integration of educational tourism as an integral component in the history curriculum. The practical implications of this study can assist education policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators in designing more innovative, engaging, and effective history learning programs, so that they can ultimately foster a younger generation that is more historically aware and able to learn from the past to build a better future.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design to analyze the impact of learning experiences in tourism destinations on the improvement of students' historical knowledge. This design was chosen because it allowed for comparisons between the group receiving the intervention (educational tour) and the control group, although the subjects were not completely randomized (Creswell, 2014).

The study participants were high school students from two different schools in city X. A total of 80 students were selected purposively: 40 students as an experimental group who would participate in the history education tourism program, and 40 students as a control group who did not participate in the program. The inclusion criteria include grade XI students who are studying the history curriculum relevant to the destination to be visited.

The tourism destination chosen is the Y historical site, which has a high relevance to the historical material taught in schools. The educational tour program is specially designed in collaboration with history teachers and expert tour guides. The program includes guided tours, interactive sessions with expert guides, observation assignments, and on-site group discussions. The duration of the program is one full day.

The data on the results of the pre-test and post-test will be analyzed using inferential statistics, namely paired-sample t-test to compare the pre-test and post-test scores in each group, and the independent-sample t-test to compare the difference in score improvement between the experimental group and the control group. The data analysis of the perception questionnaire will use descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) to describe students' perceptions. All statistical analysis will be performed using SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analysis of pretest and posttest data showed a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in improving students' historical knowledge. The experimental group, which participated in a history education tourism intervention, managed to record a substantial increase in historical knowledge scores compared to the control group. While the control group experienced only a relatively small increase in scores, the experimental group showed a much higher and more consistent increase in average scores. This shows that educational tourism has a positive influence on students' ability to understand historical material. Thus, experiential learning outside the classroom has been proven to be more effective in improving students' historical knowledge than conventional learning, making it feasible to implement it more widely in history learning.

Increase in History Knowledge in Experimental Groups

The results of the paired *t*-test in the experimental group showed a significant increase in scores from pretest to posttest. Specifically, the average pretest score of students in the experimental group was 65.25 with a standard deviation of 8.91, while the average posttest score increased to 82.50 with a standard deviation of 7.35. The results of the analysis showed that this difference was statistically significant, where the value of $t(39) = 15.34$ and $p < 0.001$. In other words, there is a difference in the average score before and after the historical educational tourism intervention that is very real and not just a result of chance.

This increase in the average score of 17.25 points reflects that students in the experimental group gained a better understanding of history after participating in the educational tour program. The effect of this increase is substantial, especially if you see that the students' initial scores are relatively moderate, and the final score is close to the good to very good category. With such a high difference in scores, it can be said that direct and contextual experiential learning, such as educational trips to historical sites, is able to stimulate students' interest in learning and deepen students' historical knowledge.

These findings are in line with a number of previous studies that have shown that active and experiential learning approaches strengthen long-term memory and improve students' conceptual understanding (Kolb, 2014; Dewey, 1938). In the context of history learning, educational tours allow students to see artifacts, historical relics, and historical environments firsthand, making it easier for them to relate classroom learning materials to the real world. In

addition, the learning experience outside the classroom provides a more interesting and enjoyable learning atmosphere, thus fostering student motivation to learn.

In terms of learning effectiveness, this increase of 17.25 points shows that educational tourism programs are not only adding new experiences, but really have a real impact on students' learning achievements. This is important for teachers and education practitioners to consider in designing history learning programs to be more meaningful and contextual. In addition, the fairly even increase in scores — as seen from the deviation of the posttest standard that was smaller than the pretest — indicated that the majority of students in the experimental group experienced a uniform improvement, not just a few individuals.

Overall, the results of this paired *t-test* provide empirical evidence that historical educational tourism is able to significantly improve students' knowledge. With the right and guided learning design, educational tourism programs have the potential to become an innovative and effective alternative to history learning strategies. These findings also provide a foothold for the development of experiential history learning in the future, both within the scope of the formal curriculum and additional learning programs outside of school.

Comparison of Historical Knowledge Enhancement between Experimental and Control Groups

An independent *t-test* was performed to compare the average difference in scores (*post-test* minus *pre-test*) between the experimental group and the control group. The results of the analysis showed that there was a very clear difference in improvement between the two groups. The experimental group, which received an intervention in the form of a history education tourism program, showed an average score increase of 17.25 points (SDdiff=4.50). In contrast, the control group, which learned history only through conventional classroom learning, experienced only an increase in scores of 3.80 points (SDdiff=2.10).

The results of the independent *t-test* confirm these findings. The value $t(78)=17.89$, $p<0.001$ shows that the difference in average score improvement between the two groups is statistically significant. In other words, the probability that this difference occurs by chance is very small, so we can be sure that educational tourism interventions really have a positive impact on students' history learning.

This positive impact can be seen as a manifestation of the effectiveness of hands-on experience-based learning. Educational tourism programs provide students with the opportunity to interact directly with authentic learning resources, such as historical sites, relics, and experienced guides. Through this active, contextual learning experience, students more easily understand historical concepts, strengthen long-term memory, and increase their curiosity about history subjects.

In addition, smaller score differences in the control group suggest that conventional history learning tends to have less of a significant impact on student knowledge improvement. On the other hand, educational tourism-based learning is able to create a more meaningful learning environment and motivate students to learn more deeply.

Overall, the results of this independent *t-test* provide very strong empirical evidence that educational tourism interventions are an effective approach to history learning. Given these significant differences, educators and education policymakers have reason to consider the implementation of educational tourism as one of the innovative learning strategies. By utilizing the potential of learning outside the classroom, it is hoped that students can achieve better and meaningful history learning outcomes.

Students' Perceptions of the Learning Experience in Tourism Destinations

The results of the analysis of student perception questionnaires from the experimental group showed that the majority of students had a very positive perception of their learning experience in tourism destinations.

- a. Interest and Engagement: Most students (92%) stated that learning history on a live site was more engaging and made them more engaged than learning in class. They felt that this experience "brought to life" history (Average = 4.7, SD = 0.5, scale 1-5).
- b. Conceptual Comprehension: About 88% of students report that they have an easier time understanding complex historical concepts when looking directly at the evidence in the field. They felt that the connection between events and locations became clearer (Average = 4.5, SD = 0.6).
- c. Information Retention: The majority of students (85%) believe that they will remember historical information learned during a visit longer than information obtained from textbooks (Average = 4.4, SD = 0.7).
- d. Overall Benefit: Almost all students (95%) recommend a similar educational excursion program to their friends and believe that it is an effective method of learning history (Average = 4.8, SD = 0.4).

Discussion

The results of this study strongly support the hypothesis that the direct learning experience in tourism destinations has a positive and significant impact on improving students' historical knowledge. These findings are consistent with previous literature highlighting the effectiveness of learning outside the classroom, particularly in museum and heritage site settings (Falk & Dierking, 2013; Hein, 1998). A substantial increase in post-test scores in the experimental group, accompanied by a marked difference compared to the control group, provided strong empirical evidence.

Several key factors can explain this effectiveness. First, the contextualization of learning is a vital element. When students learn about historical events in the locations where they actually occurred, information no longer becomes abstract (Dewey, 1938). For example, understanding the hero's struggles in an ancient fortress provides an emotional and visual dimension that textbooks can't replicate. The presence of artifacts and physical relics allows students to build a more tangible connection between the past and the present. This is in line with constructivist learning theory, in which students actively build their own knowledge through interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1970).

Second, multisensory engagement in tourism destinations improves cognitive processes. At historic sites, students not only read or listen, but they also see the architecture, feel the atmosphere of the place, and sometimes even interact with replicas or relics. The involvement of these various senses strengthens memory traces and facilitates a richer understanding (Gardner, 1983). This stimulus-rich environment stimulates curiosity and encourages active exploration, which is a prerequisite for deep learning. This high engagement is reflected in the positive perception of students who state that the experience "brings history" to life.

Third, students' intrinsic motivation appears to increase significantly through this experience. Perception questionnaires show that students feel more interested and engaged. Informal learning environments often reduce the stress and anxiety associated with traditional classroom settings, allowing students to learn more relaxed and enthusiastic (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). This high motivation not only contributes to increased knowledge, but also to the development of a positive attitude towards the learning of history as a whole, which is essential for lifelong learning (Knowles, 1975).

Fourth, social interaction and collaboration in groups during educational tours also play an important role. Students often discuss, share discoveries, and help each other understand information (Vygotsky, 1978). This process not only strengthens individual understanding but

also develops important social and communication skills. Visits to historical sites also often involve expert guides, who can explain the historical context in an engaging and interactive way, going beyond what the teacher might tell you in class.

Although the results of this study show a strong positive impact, it is important to acknowledge some limitations. The study used a quasi-experimental design, which means that full randomization could not be performed, so it is possible that other factors (other than interventions) might have influenced the results. In addition, the study only involved one tourism destination and a group of students from a specific region, so generalizations of results may be limited. Future research may consider different types of destinations (e.g., museums, art galleries, archaeological sites) and involve a more diverse student population.

The implications of this research are very significant for history education. Lecturers and curriculum policymakers should consider integrating historical educational tourism programs as a standard component in the curriculum. This is not just as an extracurricular activity, but as an integral part of the learning process being assessed. Collaboration between schools, museums, and tourism destination managers needs to be strengthened to design relevant, educational, and affordable programs. Training for history teachers in managing and maximizing the learning experience outside the classroom is also crucial. Finally, these results confirm that history learning does not have to be confined within four classroom walls; The world out there, with all its rich heritage, is a living library waiting to be explored.

CONCLUSION

This study has successfully shown that the hands-on learning experience in tourism destinations has a positive and significant impact on improving students' historical knowledge. Through a quasi-experimental design that compared a group of students who participated in an educational tour with a control group, it was found that students who participated in the program experienced a much higher increase in historical knowledge scores. This improvement not only indicates the acquisition of facts and concepts, but also a deeper and contextual understanding of historical events. These findings are reinforced by highly positive student perceptions, which state that learning in a live historical location is much more engaging, triggers greater engagement, and facilitates better information retention compared to classroom learning methods.

The effectiveness of this educational tour can be attributed to several key mechanisms, including the contextualization of learning that allows students to relate theory to physical evidence in the field, multisensory engagement that strengthens cognitive and memory processes, and increased students' intrinsic motivation due to a more authentic and engaging learning experience. In addition, social interaction and collaboration between students, as well as guidance from expert guides, also enrich the learning experience.

The implications of this research are very relevant for the development of the history curriculum in Indonesia. It is highly recommended that educational institutions and curriculum developers consider systematically integrating historical educational tourism programs as an integral component in the learning process. This will help in creating a more dynamic, relevant, and memorable learning experience for students, while fostering a deeper appreciation of the nation's cultural and historical heritage. Although the study has limitations in generalization due to the specific scope of locations and populations, the results provide strong empirical evidence to support the crucial role of tourism destinations as valuable learning environments. Future research may explore long-term impacts, test effectiveness on different types of destinations and student populations, and investigate moderation factors that might affect learning outcomes. Thus, history education can transform into a more lively, interesting, and relevant discipline for future generations.

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