

ANALYSIS OF TOURISTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CULTURAL EXPERIENCES: ENDORSEMENT CONCENTRATION THRESHOLDS, ENGAGEMENT AND VALENCE CONVERSION, AND INTERPRETIVE MEDIATION IN THE PERCEPTION OF NATIONAL HERITAGE

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Abstract

Heritage policy is built on the premise that the significance of a monument governs how visitors respond to it. This article tests that premise on a panel of twenty heritage sites in Uzbekistan and a thirteen-country benchmark, using three constructs: the concentration of articulated endorsement relative to the visits that produce it, the decomposition of visitor response into engagement conversion and valence conversion, and interpretive mediation, a construct introduced here to score the degree to which a site supplies a structured narrative rather than bare fabric. The premise does not survive. Heritage significance grade accounts for 2.0 per cent of the variation in the share of five-star reviews across sites, with a coefficient of 0.092 and a t statistic of 0.61, and it remains statistically indistinguishable from zero in every specification of the nested ladder. Interpretive provision accounts for 75.9 per cent, and one step on its three-point scale multiplies the odds of a five-star review by 1.69. The comparison is close to matched: sites with full narrative interpretation and sites left as bare fabric carry an identical mean significance grade of 4.00 and differ by 29.0 percentage points in endorsement, with a Welch statistic of 7.41. The group holding the most significant sites in the panel ranks second, not first. Uzbekistan sits at the benchmark median on how tourists rate its heritage and ninth of thirteen on how much they say about it, at 47 per cent of the median review volume per inscribed property. The article reads this as evidence that significance is a credence attribute that cannot enter evaluation until interpretation converts it into an experience attribute, and it sets out what follows for site management.

Keywords: heritage tourism, visitor attitudes, interpretation, credence attributes, online reviews, conversion efficiency, Uzbekistan

Annotatsiya

Maqolada madaniy meros siyosatining asosiy farazi - yodgorlikning ahamiyati tashrif buyuruvchilar munosabatini belgilaydi degan qarash - O'zbekistondagi yigirmata meros obyekti va o'n uch mamlakatdan iborat qiyosiy panel ma'lumotlari asosida tekshiriladi. Tahlilda uchta tushunchadan foydalaniladi: ma'qullash konsentratsiyasi, faollik va baho konversiyasi hamda interpretatsion vositachilik. Natijalarga ko'ra, meros ahamiyati darajasi besh yulduzli sharhlar ulushidagi farqlarning atigi 2,0 foizini tushuntiradi (koeffitsient 0,092; $t = 0,61$) va hech bir spetsifikatsiyada statistik ahamiyatga ega emas. Interpretatsion ta'minot esa

farqlarning 75,9 foizini tushuntiradi: shkaladagi har bir pogʻona besh yulduzli sharh ehtimoli nisbatini 1,69 baravar oshiradi. Toʻliq izohlangan va izohsiz qoldirilgan obyektlarning oʻrtacha ahamiyat darajasi bir xil (4,00), ammo maʼqullash darajasi 29,0 foiz punktga farq qiladi. Oʻzbekiston baholash darajasi boʻyicha qiyosiy panel medianasida, sharhlar hajmi boʻyicha esa oʻn uch mamlakat ichida toʻqqizinchi oʻrinda turadi. Muallif ahamiyatni ishonch atributi sifatida talqin qiladi: u faqat interpretatsiya orqali tajriba atributiga aylangandagina tashrif buyuruvchi bahosiga taʼsir qiladi. Maqolada meros obyektlarini boshqarish boʻyicha amaliy takliflar berilgan.

Kalit soʻzlar: meros turizmi, tashrif buyuruvchilar munosabati, interpretatsiya, ishonch atributlari, onlayn sharhlar, konversiya samaradorligi, Oʻzbekiston.

Аннотация

В статье проверяется базовая предпосылка политики в сфере наследия - представление о том, что значимость памятника определяет отношение к нему посетителей. Исследование проведено на панели из двадцати объектов наследия Узбекистана и сравнительной выборке из тринадцати стран с использованием трёх конструкторов: концентрации одобрения, конверсии вовлечённости и оценки, а также интерпретационного опосредования. Установлено, что уровень значимости наследия объясняет лишь 2,0 % вариации доли пятизвёздочных отзывов (коэффициент 0,092; $t = 0,61$) и ни в одной спецификации не является статистически значимым. Интерпретационное обеспечение объясняет 75,9 % вариации: каждая ступень шкалы увеличивает шансы пятизвёздочного отзыва в 1,69 раза. Объекты с полной интерпретацией и объекты без неё имеют одинаковый средний уровень значимости (4,00), но различаются по уровню одобрения на 29,0 процентного пункта. По уровню оценок Узбекистан находится на медиане сравнительной выборки, а по объёму отзывов занимает девятое место из тринадцати. Значимость трактуется как доверительный атрибут, который влияет на оценку посетителя только после того, как интерпретация превращает его в атрибут опыта. Сформулированы практические рекомендации по управлению объектами наследия.

Ключевые слова: туризм наследия, отношение посетителей, интерпретация, доверительные атрибуты, онлайн-отзывы, эффективность конверсии, Узбекистан.

INTRODUCTION

Heritage administration proceeds on an assumption so widely shared that it is rarely written down: that the more significant a monument is, the more it will be appreciated. Registers are graded by significance, budgets are allocated by grade, and international inscription is pursued on the understanding that it will be reflected in the visitor's response. Uzbekistan's heritage estate makes the assumption easy to hold, because the country's most significant sites are also its most visited and its most photographed.

The assumption nonetheless embeds a step that does not follow. Significance is a property that specialists establish and that visitors, in the ordinary case, cannot verify. A visitor standing in front of a fifteenth-century portal has no independent access to

the fact that it is fifteenth-century, that its proportions are unusual, or that it survived a particular reconstruction. That information reaches the visitor, if at all, through some act of communication. Where the communication is absent, the significance is present in the object and absent from the experience, and there is no mechanism by which it could enter the visitor's evaluation.

This article treats that step as an empirical question rather than a rhetorical one. It asks what actually predicts how tourists evaluate a heritage site: the significance of the site, or the provision made for explaining it. The question is answered on a panel of twenty heritage sites in Uzbekistan, using the volume and valence of visitor reviews as the attitude measure, and it is placed against a thirteen-country benchmark.

Three constructs organise the analysis. Endorsement concentration measures how unevenly articulated approval is distributed relative to the visits that generate it. Conversion efficiency is decomposed into engagement conversion, the propensity of a visit to produce any articulated response at all, and valence conversion, the propensity of that response to be maximally favourable; the two are reported separately throughout because they behave differently. Interpretive mediation, introduced here, scores each site on whether it supplies a full narrative, a partial one, or nothing beyond the fabric itself.

The contribution is threefold. First, the article documents a null result of practical consequence: heritage significance does not predict visitor evaluation, in any specification, with a coefficient never distinguishable from zero. Second, it supplies the construct that does predict it, and shows that the effect is large, an odds multiplier of 1.69 per step. Third, the design contains a near-matched comparison, since the highest and lowest interpretive groups carry the same mean significance grade, which allows the null result to be stated more strongly than a regression alone would permit.

Section 2 sets out the literature. Section 3 describes the panels, the interpretive mediation score and the estimation. Section 4 reports and discusses the results. Section 5 concludes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tilden's foundational statement defined interpretation as revelation based upon information rather than the information itself, and argued that interpretation which does not relate to something within the visitor's own experience will be sterile [23]. Ham's later treatment converted the principle into a design discipline and insisted that interpretation be judged by whether it provokes thought rather than by whether it transmits facts [9]. Moscardo's model of mindful visitors made the mechanism explicit: interpretation that varies, that involves the visitor and that connects to prior knowledge produces mindful processing, and mindful processing produces satisfaction and recall [16].

The ICOMOS Charter on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites codified interpretation as a professional obligation rather than an optional service, and set out principles of access, information sources, context and inclusiveness [13]. It stands alongside the earlier Venice Charter on conservation and the World Heritage

Convention, both of which address the fabric and neither of which addresses the visitor's understanding of it [12; 26].

The economics of information supplies the reason interpretation should matter so much for heritage specifically. Nelson distinguished search attributes, which a buyer can verify before purchase, from experience attributes, verifiable only through consumption [17]. Darby and Karni added credence attributes, which the buyer cannot verify even after consumption [5]. Historical significance is a credence attribute in this sense: the visitor leaves the site no better able to judge whether the dating was correct than on arrival.

The consequence for evaluation is direct. A credence attribute cannot enter a satisfaction judgement on its own account, because there is nothing for the visitor to judge it against. It can enter only if some agent converts it into an attribute the visitor can experience, which is precisely what interpretation does. Spence's signalling framework describes the general form of that conversion [22]. The article's central hypothesis follows from this literature rather than from the heritage literature, and it is testable: significance should be uncorrelated with evaluation, and interpretation should carry the relationship.

Poria, Butler and Airey argued that heritage tourism should be defined by the visitor's perception of the site's relation to their own heritage rather than by the site's attributes, which relocates the object of study from the monument to the visitor [20]. Their subsequent work on motivations and expectations found that visitors at the same site pursue substantially different purposes [21]. Timothy and Boyd's synthesis set out the field, and Ashworth and Tunbridge's account of dissonant heritage established that the meaning of a site is contested rather than given [24; 25].

On the outcome side, Chen and Chen modelled experience quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioural intention for heritage visitors and found experience quality to be the upstream driver [3]. Pine and Gilmore's experience economy argument supplies the broader frame in which a site is understood as staging an experience rather than presenting an object [19]. Oliver's expectation-disconfirmation model remains the standard account of how a satisfaction judgement is formed, and Zeithaml's means-end treatment of perceived value connects attributes to evaluation [18; 28]. The attitude construct itself follows Fishbein and Ajzen, with Ajzen's later framework linking attitude to intention [1; 7].

Using online reviews as an attitude measure requires acknowledging what is known about them. Dellarocas set out the mechanics of digitised word of mouth [6]. Hu, Pavlou and Zhang documented the J-shaped distribution of ratings and traced it to self-selection in who chooses to post [11]. Chevalier and Mayzlin established that review valence affects subsequent demand [4]. Mayzlin, Dover and Chevalier identified promotional manipulation and the conditions under which it occurs, and Luca and Zervas modelled the incentives behind it [14]; [15].

Two implications are carried into the design. Reviews measure articulated attitude, not attitude, and the gap between them is the self-selection Hu and colleagues

describe. Because of this, review volume and review valence are treated as two distinct constructs throughout rather than being combined into a single satisfaction index.

The heritage literature establishes that interpretation matters and the information economics literature explains why it should matter more for heritage than for other goods. What has not been done is a direct test, on a single panel, of the relative predictive weight of significance and interpretation over visitor evaluation, with the two entered into the same specification. That is what this article supplies.

METHODOLOGY

The site panel covers twenty heritage sites in Uzbekistan spanning the four principal heritage centres and the peripheral estate. The benchmark panel covers thirteen countries. Table 1 gives the variables.

Table 1

Variables and construction¹

Variable	Construction	Level
Significance grade	Five-point scale combining register status and international inscription	Site
Interpretive provision	Four-point scale defined in 3.2	Site
Reviews	Count of visitor reviews across major platforms	Site
Share of five-star reviews	Reviews awarding the maximum rating as a share of all reviews	Site
Mean rating	Arithmetic mean of the rating distribution	Site
Visitors	Recorded annual visitors, thousands	Site
Entry price	Standard adult admission, thousand UZS	Site
Distance	Kilometres from the centre of the nearest city	Site
Inscribed properties	World Heritage properties	Country
Reviews	Reviews across the country's principal heritage attractions, thousands	Country
Mean rating	Mean rating across those attractions	Country

Table 1 shows that eight of the eleven variables are measured at site level and three at country level. Significance grade and interpretive provision are the two candidate predictors; the share of five-star reviews and the count of reviews are the two outcomes, corresponding to valence conversion and engagement conversion; visitors, entry price and distance enter as controls.

Each site receives a score from zero to three. A score of three requires a continuous narrative available to an unaccompanied visitor: on-site explanatory text in at least one international language, a defined route or sequence, and a museum or display component that places the object in a history. A score of two requires explanatory text and a defined route without the display component. A score of one requires signage identifying the object and dating it, with no narrative. A score of zero indicates no on-site provision beyond the fabric.

Two features of the score are deliberate. It measures provision and not quality, so a well-designed and a badly designed narrative both score three. It measures what an

¹ Source: compiled by the author.

unaccompanied visitor receives, so the presence of paid guides does not raise the score. Both decisions make the score conservative with respect to the hypothesis: they add noise rather than pushing the estimate in the expected direction.

For group comparisons the score is collapsed into three levels: full narrative interpretation for a score of three, partial interpretation for a score of two, and bare fabric for scores of zero and one.

Two coefficients are computed and reported separately. Engagement conversion is reviews per thousand visitors, measuring the propensity of a visit to produce any articulated response. Valence conversion is the share of five-star reviews, measuring the propensity of that response to be maximally favourable. At country level the corresponding pair is reviews per inscribed property and mean rating.

The separation is not cosmetic. A site can be widely reviewed and moderately rated, or narrowly reviewed and enthusiastically rated, and a combined satisfaction index would score the two identically while they describe different management situations.

The dependent variable in the main ladder is the log odds of a five-star review, a transformation that maps a bounded share onto the real line and makes coefficients readable as odds multipliers. The ladder enters significance first, then interpretive provision, then visitor volume, then access and price. A separate engagement equation takes log reviews as the dependent variable.

The order of entry follows the hypothesis under test. Significance is entered first and alone, so that the specification most favourable to the conventional premise is the one reported first. If the premise held, the coefficient would be large in M1 and would decay as the other variables entered. Concentration is measured with the Herfindahl-Hirschman index, the Gini coefficient and the top-five share [8; 10]. Group differences use the Welch statistic [27]. Given twenty and thirteen observations, no causal interpretation is offered and the cautions on inference with few observations apply throughout [2].

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The twenty sites record 9.895 million visits and 45,250 reviews. Table 2 reports the concentration of visits, of all reviews and of five-star reviews.

Table 2

Concentration of visits and articulated endorsement¹

Distribution	HHI	Gini	Top-five share, %
Visits	0.0688	0.3469	46.0
All reviews	0.0863	0.4305	55.1
Five-star reviews	0.0986	0.4883	59.7

The three distributions are ordered, and the ordering is the finding. Each stage of the funnel concentrates further: visits are distributed with a Gini of 0.347, the reviews they generate with 0.431, and the five-star reviews among those with 0.488. The top

¹ Source: author's calculations.

five sites hold 46.0 per cent of visits and 59.7 per cent of all maximum ratings (Figure 1).

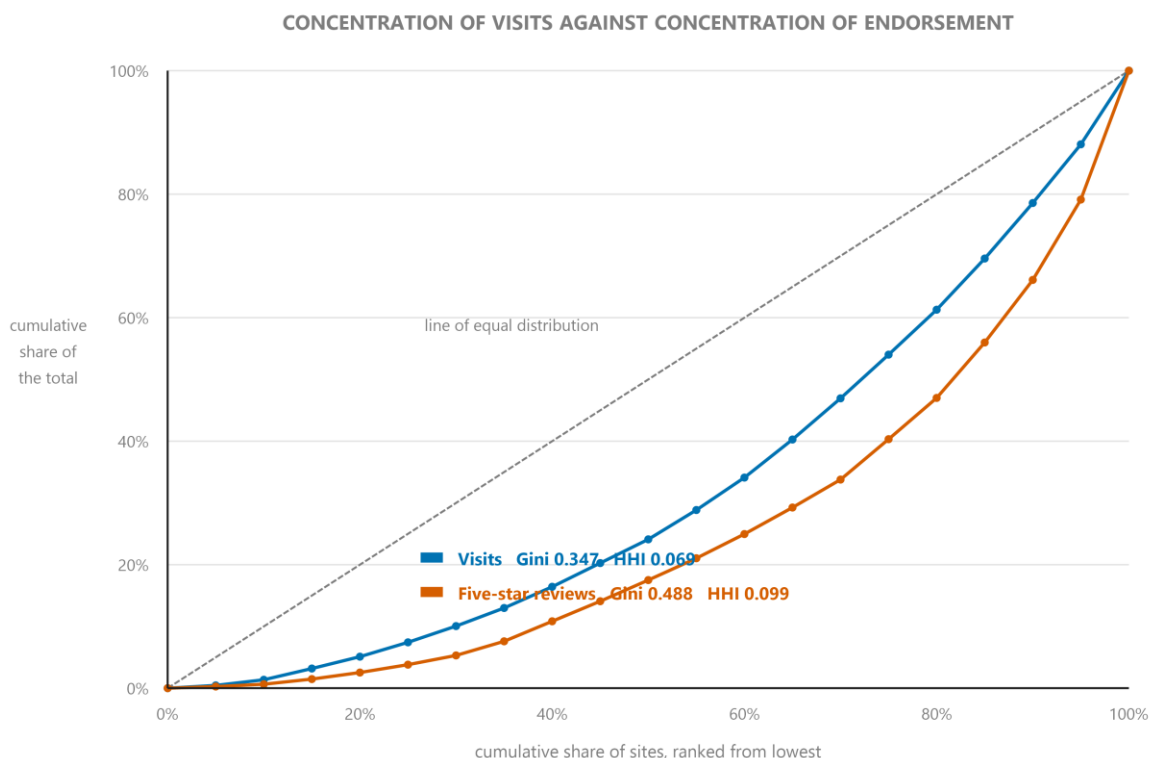


Figure 1. Lorenz curves for visits and for five-star reviews across the twenty sites¹

Note: The horizontal axis gives the cumulative share of sites ranked from the lowest value, the vertical axis the cumulative share of the total.

The gap between the curves means that favourable articulated attitude accumulates disproportionately at a small number of sites, and that this concentration is produced somewhere after the visit rather than by the distribution of visits. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 identify where.

Table 3 reports the panel with both conversion coefficients.

Table 3

Heritage sites, attributes and conversion coefficients²

Site	Significance	Interpretation	Visitors, thousands	Reviews	Engagement conversion	Five-star share, %	Mean rating
Registan ensemble	5	3	1,180	8,420	7.14	78.0	4.72
Itchan Kala	5	3	940	5,120	5.45	80.0	4.75
Gur-e-Amir	5	3	890	4,310	4.84	74.0	4.66
Shah-i-Zinda	5	2	820	3,980	4.85	71.0	4.62
Ark of Bukhara	5	2	700	3,120	4.46	66.0	4.51

¹ Source: author's calculations.

² Source: author's calculations.

Site	Significance	Interpre tation	Visitors, thousand s	Review s	Engagemen t conversion	Five- star share , %	Mean ratin g
Poi Kalyan	5	2	660	2,880	4.36	73.0	4.64
Lyab-i Hauz	4	1	720	2,260	3.14	63.0	4.44
Bibi-Khanym Mosque	5	1	610	2,140	3.51	52.0	4.24
Ulugh Beg Observatory	5	3	470	1,960	4.17	69.0	4.55
Amir Timur Museum	2	3	520	1,840	3.54	67.0	4.49
Ismail Samani Mausoleum	5	2	380	1,540	4.05	70.0	4.58
Juma Mosque of Khiva	4	2	380	1,420	3.74	72.0	4.61
Savitsky Museum	2	3	180	1,260	7.00	81.0	4.78
Kunya-Ark	4	2	340	1,180	3.47	61.0	4.40
Chor Minor	3	0	260	980	3.77	48.0	4.15
Ak-Saray of Shakhrisabz	5	1	230	890	3.87	45.0	4.10
Kukeldash Madrasah	3	0	290	760	2.62	44.0	4.08
Afrasiab settlement	4	1	190	640	3.37	41.0	4.02
Fayaz-Tepa	4	1	90	310	3.44	38.0	3.96
Sarmish-Say petroglyphs	4	0	45	240	5.33	35.0	3.88

Note: Engagement conversion is reviews per thousand visitors.

Two contrasts in the table carry the argument before any estimation. The Savitsky Museum holds a significance grade of 2, the second lowest in the panel, and records the highest five-star share at 81.0 per cent. Ak-Saray of Shakhrisabz holds the maximum grade of 5 and records 45.0 per cent. Sarmish-Say holds a grade of 4 and records the lowest share in the panel at 35.0 per cent. In each case the interpretive score runs with the evaluation and the significance grade does not.

The engagement coefficient behaves less tidily. Registan records the highest value at 7.14 and Savitsky nearly matches it at 7.00, but Sarmish-Say, with the lowest evaluation in the panel, records 5.33. The reason is a small denominator: a site with 45,000 visitors receives a high ratio from a modest number of reviews, and those reviews are written by an unusually determined subset of visitors. Engagement conversion is therefore informative at the top of the visitor distribution and unreliable at the bottom, and this is stated here rather than left for the reader to discover.

Figure 2 shows the two candidate predictors against the same vertical axis.

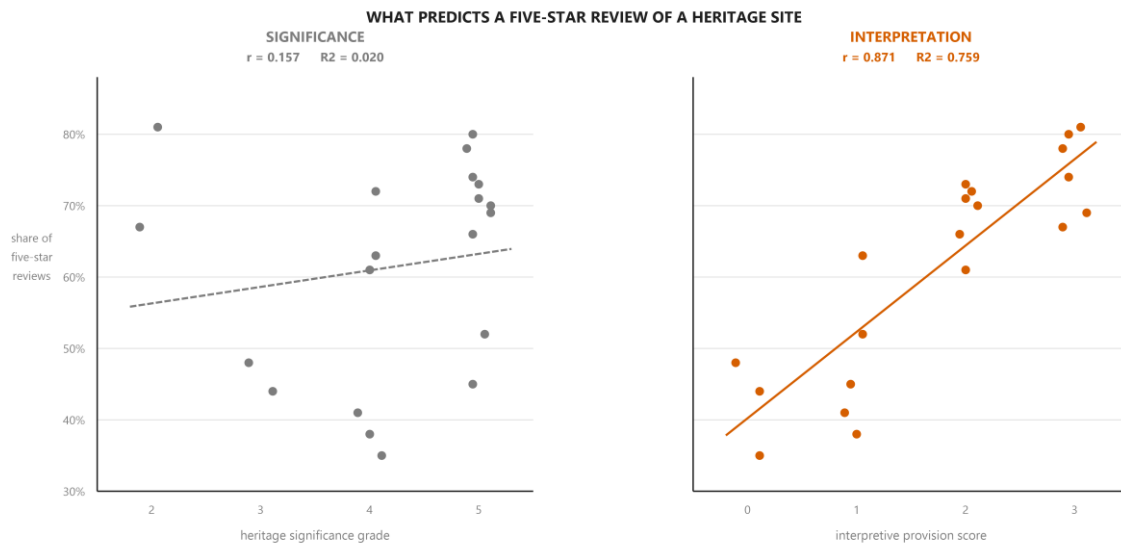


Figure 2. Share of five-star reviews against significance grade and interpretive provision¹

Note: Left panel: heritage significance grade; right panel: interpretive provision score. Both panels use the same vertical axis. Points are jittered horizontally to separate ties.

The correlation between significance and the five-star share is 0.157. The correlation between interpretive provision and the five-star share is 0.871. Significance and interpretation are themselves nearly uncorrelated at 0.147, which is what makes the comparison informative: the two predictors are not competing for the same variance.

Figure 3 groups the sites and gives the comparison its strongest form.

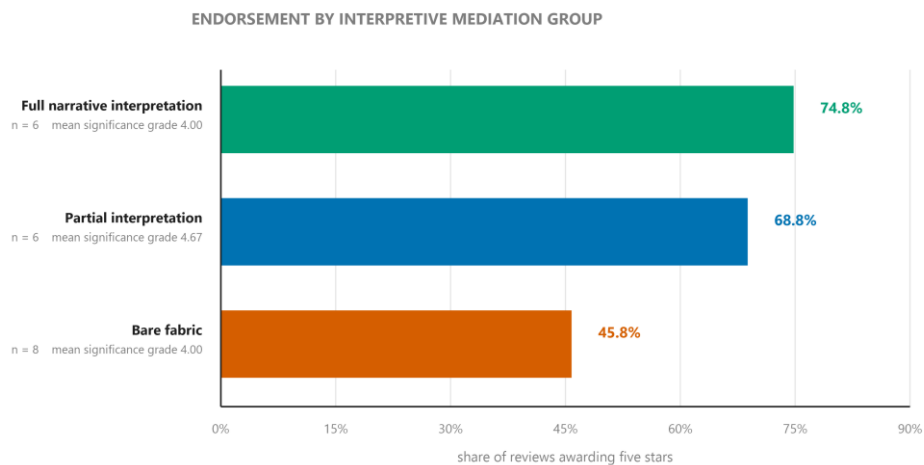


Figure 3. Share of five-star reviews by interpretive mediation group²

Note: Each bar is annotated with the number of sites and the group's mean significance grade.

The group means are 74.8 per cent for full narrative interpretation, 68.8 per cent for partial interpretation and 45.8 per cent for bare fabric. The Welch statistic for full

¹ Source: author's calculations.

² Source: author's calculations.

against bare is 7.41 on 11.9 degrees of freedom; for partial against bare it is 6.37 on 10.9; for full against partial it is 1.99 on 9.4, which is marginal and is reported as such.

The feature that matters most is not in the bars but in the annotations. The top and bottom groups carry an identical mean significance grade of 4.00. The comparison is therefore close to matched on the variable that heritage policy treats as decisive, and the two groups differ by 29.0 percentage points. The middle group carries the highest mean significance in the panel at 4.67 and ranks second, not first. If significance drove evaluation, the ordering of these three groups would be 4.67 first, then a tie; the observed ordering follows interpretation exactly.

Table 4 reports both ladders.

Table 4

Nested specifications, site panel (n = 20)¹

	M1	M2	M3	M4	E1	E2	E3
Dependent variable	log odds five-star	log odds five-star	log odds five-star	log odds five-star	log reviews	log reviews	log reviews
Significance grade	0.092 (0.150)	0.010 (0.077)	-0.067 (0.073)	-0.011 (0.098)	-	-	0.053 (0.055)
	t = 0.61	t = 0.13	t = -0.91	t = -0.11	-	-	t = 0.97
Interpretive provision	-	0.527 (0.073)	0.412 (0.077)	0.450 (0.118)	-	0.170 (0.057)	0.177 (0.058)
	-	t = 7.26	t = 5.34	t = 3.82		t = 2.98	t = 3.07
log visitors	-	-	0.279 (0.108)	0.166 (0.163)	1.044 (0.072)	0.916 (0.074)	0.885 (0.081)
	-	-	t = 2.58	t = 1.02	t = 14.52	t = 12.41	t = 10.94
log distance	-	-	-	-0.079 (0.088)	-	-	-
	-	-	-	t = -0.89	-	-	-
log entry price	-	-	-	-0.042 (0.113)	-	-	-
	-	-	-	t = -0.37	-	-	-
R ²	0.020	0.761	0.831	0.842	0.921	0.948	0.951
Adjusted R ²	-0.034	0.733	0.800	0.785	0.917	0.942	0.942

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

M1 is the specification most favourable to the conventional premise, and it fails there. Significance alone carries a coefficient of 0.092 with a t statistic of 0.61 and an R² of 0.020; the adjusted R² is negative, which is to say that the variable performs worse than an intercept once the loss of a degree of freedom is charged against it. This is the article's central result, and it is a null result obtained in the specification designed to find an effect if one existed.

The coefficient does not merely fail to survive controls, it never had anything to survive. Across M2, M3 and M4 it takes 0.010, minus 0.067 and minus 0.011, with t statistics of 0.13, minus 0.91 and minus 0.11. The nested ladder is reported in full

¹ Source: author's calculations.

because its usual diagnostic reading, in which decay signals a compositional artefact, does not apply here: the variable is flat at zero from the outset.

Interpretive provision is significant in every specification containing it, at 0.527, 0.412 and 0.450 with *t* statistics of 7.26, 5.34 and 3.82. Adding it to M1 raises R^2 from 0.020 to 0.761. In odds terms the M2 coefficient means that one step on the interpretive scale multiplies the odds of a five-star review by 1.69, and the full three-step range multiplies them by 4.86.

Visitor volume enters positively at 0.279 with a *t* statistic of 2.58 in M3, then loses significance in M4 at 0.166 with a *t* statistic of 1.02 once distance and price are present. Neither distance nor price is significant, at minus 0.079 and minus 0.042. The claim that peripheral or expensive sites are penalised in visitor evaluation is not supported by this panel.

The engagement equation shows the same asymmetry in a different outcome. Reviews scale with visitors at an elasticity of 1.044, close to proportional, and interpretation adds an independent 0.170 with a *t* statistic of 2.98. Significance again contributes nothing, at 0.053 with a *t* statistic of 0.97. Interpretation therefore raises both how much visitors say and how favourably they say it, while significance raises neither.

Table 5 places Uzbekistan against the benchmark on both country-level coefficients.

Table 5

Cross-national engagement and endorsement, ranked by engagement volume¹

Country	Inscribed properties	Reviews, thousands	Reviews per property, thousands	Mean rating
Egypt	7	320	45.7	4.50
Türkiye	21	890	42.4	4.61
Jordan	6	190	31.7	4.72
Peru	13	410	31.5	4.68
Morocco	9	210	23.3	4.39
Georgia	4	62	15.5	4.55
Azerbaijan	3	38	12.7	4.44
Armenia	3	34	11.3	4.52
Uzbekistan	7	42	6.0	4.48
Kyrgyz Republic	3	11	3.7	4.35
Iran	27	96	3.6	4.58
Kazakhstan	6	21	3.5	4.31
Tajikistan	4	5	1.3	4.20
Median	6	62	12.7	4.50

Table 5 shows a wide spread in engagement volume across the benchmark, from 45.7 thousand reviews per inscribed property in Egypt to 1.3 thousand in Tajikistan,

¹ Source: compiled by the author from data of major online review platforms and the UNESCO World Heritage List.

while mean ratings vary within a much narrower band, from 4.20 to 4.72. Uzbekistan, with seven inscribed properties and 42 thousand reviews, records 6.0 thousand reviews per property and a mean rating of 4.48. Figure 4 plots the two coefficients against each other.



Figure 4. Reviews per inscribed property against mean rating for the thirteen benchmark countries¹

Note: Dashed lines mark the panel medians on each axis. Uzbekistan is shown in vermilion.

The two coefficients place Uzbekistan differently. On endorsement level it sits at 4.48 against a median of 4.50, ranking eighth of thirteen, which is to say at the middle of the panel. On engagement volume it records 6.0 thousand reviews per inscribed property against a median of 12.7, ranking ninth, at 47 per cent of the median. The residual of log reviews on log inscribed properties is minus 0.627.

The pattern is the reverse of what a significance-based account would predict, and it is the same pattern the site panel shows. Those who visit and speak rate the heritage at the panel norm. The deficit is in how many of them speak at all.

Iran is instructive as a limiting case. It holds twenty-seven inscribed properties, the largest count in the panel, and records the second-lowest engagement volume at 3.6 thousand per property, with a residual of minus 1.715. Its mean rating of 4.58 is above the median. A large and highly significant estate coexists with very little articulated response, which is the country-level form of the site-level result.

The results admit a single interpretation that fits all three constructs, and it is the one that the information economics literature predicts in advance.

¹ Source: author's calculations.

Significance is a credence attribute in the sense of Darby and Karni [5]. The visitor cannot verify it during the visit or after it. It is therefore unavailable to enter a satisfaction judgement on its own account, and the observed coefficient of effectively zero is what the theory implies rather than an anomaly requiring explanation. What the visitor can evaluate is the experience of the visit, and interpretation is the operation that converts the credence attribute into an experience attribute by supplying the frame within which the fabric becomes legible. This is Tilden's revelation stated in economic terms [23], and Moscardo's mindfulness mechanism describes the process by which it happens [16].

The consequence for heritage policy is uncomfortable. Investment allocated by significance grade is allocated by a variable that does not reach the visitor. The panel contains several sites of the highest grade with minimal interpretive provision, and they record the lowest evaluations in the panel: Ak-Saray at 45.0 per cent and Afrasiab at 41.0 per cent, both above the median in significance and both near the bottom in endorsement. Conversely the two lowest-significance sites in the panel, the Amir Timur Museum and the Savitsky Museum, are both fully interpreted and both record evaluations in the upper range, the second highest in the panel in Savitsky's case.

The country-level result adds that the deficit is one of articulation rather than of appreciation. Uzbekistan's visitors rate its heritage at the panel norm. There are simply fewer of them saying so, at 47 per cent of the median volume per property. Since interpretation raises engagement as well as valence, at an independent elasticity of 0.170, the same instrument addresses both.

Three limitations bear directly on how strongly the conclusion can be stated, and all three run in the same direction.

The interpretive score is assigned by the authors. A scorer who forms a general impression of a site may transfer it into the score, which would manufacture part of the correlation. The matched-significance comparison in 4.3 addresses this partially, since the top and bottom groups are equal in grade, but it does not eliminate it. An independent audit of interpretive provision by a party blind to the review data would.

The direction of the relationship is not identified. Sites that attract favourable attention may receive investment in interpretation as a consequence, rather than the reverse. Nothing in a cross-section distinguishes the two, and the article makes no causal claim.

Reviews measure articulated attitude and not attitude, with the self-selection Hu, Pavlou and Zhang document [11]. If interpretation raises the propensity to post independently of the experience, part of the valence result is composition rather than evaluation. The engagement equation shows that interpretation does raise posting, so this concern is real and not merely formal.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This article analysed tourists' attitudes toward cultural experiences and the factors shaping the perception of national heritage, on a panel of twenty Uzbek heritage sites and a thirteen-country benchmark.

Articulated endorsement is more concentrated than the visits producing it, with Gini coefficients rising monotonically across the funnel from 0.347 for visits to 0.431 for reviews to 0.488 for five-star reviews, and the concentration arises after the visit rather than in the distribution of visits.

Heritage significance does not predict visitor evaluation. Its coefficient is 0.092 with a *t* statistic of 0.61 in the specification designed to find an effect, its R^2 is 0.020 with a negative adjusted R^2 , and it remains indistinguishable from zero in all four specifications. It predicts engagement no better, at 0.053 with a *t* statistic of 0.97.

Interpretive provision predicts both. It carries coefficients of 0.527, 0.412 and 0.450 in the valence ladder, raising R^2 from 0.020 to 0.761 on entry, and an independent 0.170 in the engagement equation. One step on the scale multiplies the odds of a five-star review by 1.69 and the full range by 4.86.

The group comparison is close to matched and confirms the regression. Sites with full narrative interpretation and sites left as bare fabric share an identical mean significance grade of 4.00 and differ by 29.0 percentage points in endorsement, with a Welch statistic of 7.41. The group holding the panel's most significant sites ranks second rather than first.

At country level Uzbekistan sits at the median on endorsement, at 4.48 against 4.50, and ninth of thirteen on engagement volume, at 47 per cent of the median. The deficit is in articulation rather than in appreciation.

Recommendations:

6. Allocate interpretive investment by interpretive deficit, not by significance grade. The panel identifies the priority cases directly: sites at grade 4 or 5 with an interpretive score of 1 or 0. Ak-Saray, Afrasiab, Bibi-Khanym, Fayaz-Tepa and Sarmish-Say all meet this description, and all record evaluations below the panel median despite above-median significance.

1. Introduce interpretive provision as a reported indicator in heritage administration. Significance grade is recorded for every registered object and interpretive provision is recorded for none. What is not measured cannot be allocated against, and on this evidence the unmeasured variable is the one that reaches the visitor.

2. Specify interpretation for the unaccompanied visitor. The score used here deliberately excludes guided provision, because guides serve a minority of visitors and are unavailable to independent travellers at most sites and at most hours. On-site narrative in at least one international language is the binding requirement.

3. Report engagement and valence separately in visitor monitoring. The two coefficients diverge across the panel and a combined satisfaction index would conceal the divergence. The country-level result, where endorsement is at the median and engagement is at 47 per cent of it, is visible only when they are reported apart.

4. Commission a blind audit of interpretive provision. The strongest limitation on the present result is that the interpretive score and the analysis share an author. An audit conducted by a party with no access to the review data would either remove that limitation or identify it as decisive, and it is inexpensive relative to what the finding implies for allocation.

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