VISITORS' ENGAGEMENT AND AUTHENTICITY: JAPANESE HERITAGE CONSUMPTION

Abstract

Understanding the sense of authenticity of heritage attractions is important for tourism management and marketing because presentation, interpretation and verification has a direct bearing on motivations to visit and engage with heritage tourism sites. This paper establishes relationships among the concepts of culturally specific motivation, perception of authenticity, engagement and attendant behavioral consequences based on domestic visitors' experiences at Japanese heritage sites. It further extends Kolar and Zabkar's (2010) model of authenticity by including concepts of serious leisure, heritage related behaviors, self-connection and their effects over engagement using Partial Least Square, whereby both formative and reflective scales are included. The structural model is tested with a sample of 768 visitors in a culturally specific setting of Japanese heritage sites. The empirical validation of the conceptual model supports the research hypotheses. These findings contribute to a better understanding of visitors' perceptions and valuation of authenticity in Japanese tourist attractions. Several implications can be drawn from the study findings and interesting directions for future research are provided.

Key Words

Authenticity, Engagement, Japan, Heritage, Loyalty, Preconceived notions

Highlights

- Tests a structural model (PLS) using both formative and reflective scales
- Integrating/introducing a visitors' engagement concept to authenticity
- Focuses on Japanese visitors' experience of authenticity
- Concepts: serious leisure, heritage behaviours, self-connection and engagement
- Objective authenticity and engagement centric model presented

1.0 Introduction

Japanese consumers' views and distinctive perspectives on heritage authenticity are investigated in order to explore and challenge the prevailing western-centric perceptions in the literature. Furthermore this addresses the theoretical gap surrounding heritage authenticity and engagement, in particular, testing the idea that tourists' engagement may vary in authentic consumption experiences (Black, 2009; Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Within tourism, authenticity and engagement research has mainly focused on its application to non-Asian settings (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). However, select studies have considered aspects of authenticity in East Asia, namely China (Xie, 2003; Zhou, Zhang, & Edelheim, 2013), Korea (Cho, 2012), Macau (Wong, 2013) and a passing reference to Japan (Ehrentraut, 1993). Japan has a capitalist economy and a multi-party democracy; self-styling itself as a Western economy in the far-east (Horne, 1998). Historically, Japanese society has enjoyed low crime rates, high levels of education and an economically prosperous large middle class. Japan shares certain cultural commonalities with Asian neighbors such as China and Korea (Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Kai-Cheng, 1997), in particular Confucianism emphasizing the importance of the group, and self-sacrifice, however, Japanese society applied it critically to its own culture (Yan & Pan, 2010). Thus, Japan's heritage tourism, as a context for this study, is shown to be distinctive from its Asian neighbors, including South Korea, because of the maturity and distinctiveness of its domestic heritage tourism market and the divergent cultural sensibilities relative to its neighbors.

A broader concept of authenticity within a new context is investigated: cultural heritage sites in Japan. The legacy of the romantic gaze and the commodification of heritage (Goody, 2006; Rigney, 2001) impose assumptions of antiquity and genuineness on heritage products. In Japan certain factors have conspired against this; a great number of structures are made of wood which tend to decay over time, combined with seismic events (earthquakes and tsunami), and the legacy of Allied bombing in WWII have necessitated extensive restoration or reconstruction. This is not perceived to be the same as Las Vegas building its own version of the Great Pyramid of Giza, however, it does open up some interesting research questions around staged authenticity, primarily, how visitors' engagement can be influenced by their: perceptions of authenticity, preconceived behaviors, and motivations, and how these four concepts influence loyalty.

This paper now splits into five sections. First it briefly explores authenticity debates within the extant literature. The authors identify limitations in the existing discourse, specifically highlighting a theoretical gap relating to engagement and notions of authenticity. Next, the notion of authenticity is framed within a Japanese context. In the second part of the paper, the authors extend Kolar and Zabkar's (2010) model of authenticity by including concepts of Serious Leisure (Stebbins,

1996), Heritage Related Behaviors (McDonald, 2011), Self-Connections (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010) and their influences over engagement (Taheri & Jafari 2012; Taheri, Jafari, & O'Gorman, 2014). This leads to a new conceptual framework that allows tourist site managers to position and develop their attractions. As well as providing theoretical development, it also highlights the contextual gap in the strength of the overseas Japanese market and its own home market. Drawn from the literature, the authors create a four-stage conceptual model focused on authenticity, but underpinned by visitors' preconceived ideas, motivations, levels of engagement, and ultimately loyalty to a site. The next section is empirical; the authors first outline the methodological approach, before presenting the results of the survey where the authors test a structural model using both formative and reflective scales (Taheri et al., 2014; Zabkar, Brencic, & Dmitrovic, 2010). In the final section of the paper: the authors draw together the threads of the argument, offering conclusions and a consideration of implications for the industry before highlighting the limitations of the approach, and pointing to avenues for future research.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 The authenticity debate

Debates on the possibility of 'authenticity' in industrialized cultural production can be traced to the Frankfurt School's Marxian critique of consumers cast as 'objects of calculation … [and] an appendage of machinery' (Adorno, 1991) to be categorized through 'interpellation' (Althusser, 2008). Less pessimistic developments in consumer culture and related theory ameliorate this with notions of contingency and dispersal of consumer reception, relationships and engagement with cultural goods via multiple 'audiences' (Bell, 1996; Collins, 1999; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Horne, 1986; Latour, 2010; Slater, 1997; Williams, 1963). Given that tourism destination competitiveness is largely bound up with the real or imagined specificities of place, it is unsurprising that the notion of authenticity has been taken up and refined within this field. There is a constant tension amongst tourists' expectation of authenticity at popular heritage sites, the industry's ability to fulfill this without commodifying the attraction itself and consumer authentication of that commodity through repeated use and habituation (Cohen, 2004; MacCannel 1999). Tourist notions of authenticity are largely driven by connection and association with and quality of experience of the site,they are not necessarily responsive to rigid criteria of truth and falsehood (Hall, 2007; King, 2007; Shackley, 1994).

If it is accepted that specialist authentication of heritage sites and cultural objects is beyond all tourists in all situations, then the authors are left with the relationship between industry mediation and consumer reception (Asplett & Cooper, 2000; McIntosh, 2004; Park et al., 2010; Swanson & Timothy, 2012). Theoretical and contextually applied work that tries to bridge this gap between the two includes notions of tourist agency through existential and creative authenticity (de Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Gonzalez, 2008; Park et al., 2010; Richards & Wilson, 2006; Wang,

1999), other authors have posited the existence of 'constructive authenticity' as a response to 'object based authenticity', in which tourists are complicit in and aware of the mediation, reconstruction, modification and commodification of cultural heritage in the pursuit of quality of experience (Guttentag, 2010; Henderson, 2000; Ryan & Gu, 2010; Stebbins, 2009; Wang, 1999).

This unsettled debate on the fluidity of mediation and tourism reception of 'authenticity' may be a manifestation of multiple modes of identity formation that transcend the area of tourism consumption (Lau, 2010; McDonald, 2011; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Rickley-Boyd, 2012). This leads to the questions posed by this paper on how specific culturally and historically contingent modes of thought with relation to markers of antiquity, provenance and 'heritage' itself impact on more generally applied conceptualizations of tourist understandings of 'authenticity'.

2.2 Culturally specific notions of authenticity: Japan

It is a truism of Cultural Studies that discourse is culturally contingent and produces its own reality (Said, 1978). Since the academic study of tourism, has been largely filtered through 'The Western' and specifically 'Anglocentric' institutional lenses and assumptions up until now, an attempt to broaden conceptualization to wider frames of thought is necessary. In this paper, it is done in the spirit of Roland Barthes (1982), who attempted to apprehend the normality of Japanese culture while retaining the knowledge that its 'strangeness' was a product of his own cultural position. Since the notion of authenticity is itself a social construct, it is examined here through the lens of Japanese heritage consumers', understandings of its meaning and importance.

Japanese heritage policy mandates, in principle, the maintenance of the integrity of individual sites (Ehrentraut, 1993).Yet, because of historical tendency to build in wood, seismic instability in the region and the devastation visited upon the country in World War II, 'ancient' structures have often been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt over time (Miyazaki et al., 2002). There is a value attached to 'aestheticization' in Japanese culture, which may be receptive to manipulation of atmosphere to suit state and corporate driven collective social norms. Yet, this is ameliorated by tendencies towards collective consumption of tourist sites constructed on overlapping, but not always simultaneous, notions of racial, ethnic and national identities which may be receptive to external validation and 'branding' by authenticating bodies such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site list (Ehrentraut, 1993; Graburn & Butler, 1995; Jimura, 2011). Preliminary secondary sources suggest that the cultural particularity of Japanese heritage supply and tourist conception of it presents this as an appropriate context upon which to cross-cut the discussion of authenticity with national specificity.

3.0 Conceptual model and theoretical foundation

A four-stage conceptual model has been developed from the literature to advance the consumer-based model of authenticity (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et

al., 2013), which emphasizes relationships among the concepts of cultural motivations, perception of authenticity and behavioral consequences based on visitors' experiences at heritage sites. However, the authors also echo Taheri et al.'s (2014) call for attentiveness to visitors' level of engagement in heritage sites. They argue that it can be used to predict tourists' behavior in terms of their engagement and its drivers of engagement. Furthermore, based on previous studies showing cultural motivation influences (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013), the authors hypothesize that serious leisure, heritage related behaviors, and self-connection (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Park et al., 2010; Stebbins, 2009) can also be strong predictors of authenticity, engagement, and behavioral consequences. Here, perceptions of authenticity and preconceived factors influence visitors' engagement. In addition, Kolar and Zabkar (2010) stress that there is a lack of evidence for whether visitors would have similar experiences in other cultural settings and heritage sites. Thus, this study concentrates on such relationships in a culturally specific setting (Japan), heritage sites such as Miyajima's Itsukushima Shrine, as well as extending and amending the relationship between various related variables (serious leisure, heritage-rated behaviors, self-connection, engagement and loyalty) (See Fig. 1).

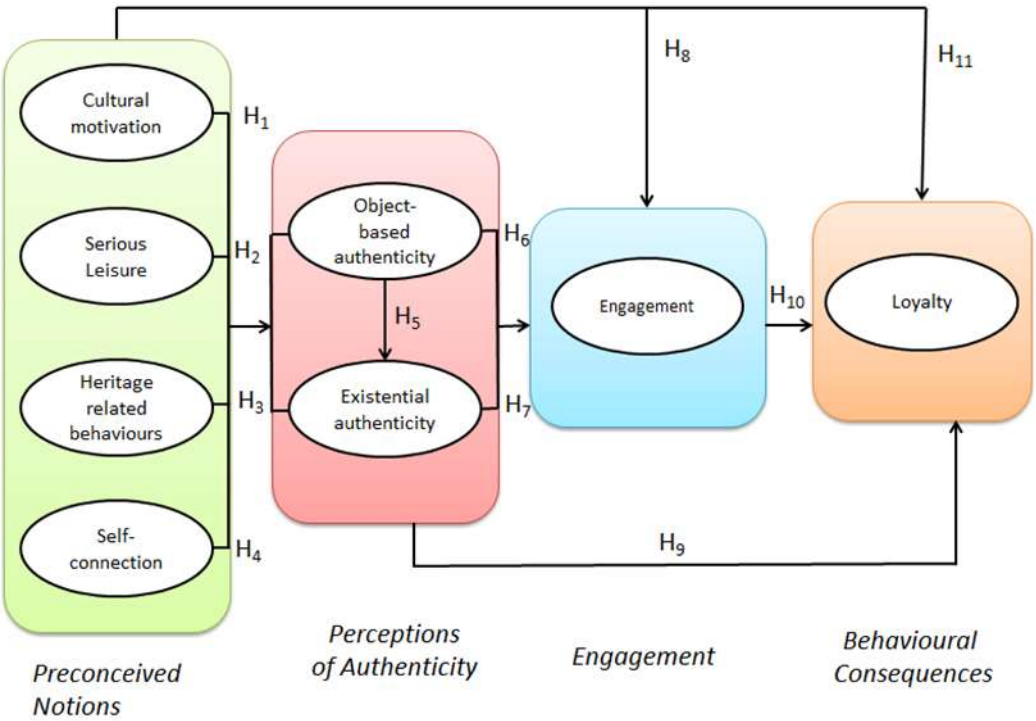

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

The conceptual model comprises eleven hypothesized associations between key constructs. The authors elaborate on each of these constructs in the following sub-sections.

3.1 Authenticity: Object-based and existential

Authenticity is considered both a consequence of the tourist experience as well as an important antecedent due to its ability to motivate, interest and drive tourist visitations (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Leigh, Peters, & Shelton, 2006; Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003;Yeoman, Brass, & McMahon-Beattie, 2007). It can also be divided into object-based and existential authenticity, allowing tourist experiences to be explained in the absence of authentic objects (Wang, 1999) and through the relationship between both the tourism object, and the tourists' existential experiences (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Object-based authenticity is "…how people see themselves in relation to objects" (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006 p. 74). It includes both the tourists' desires to visit and experience historical sites as well as to build genuine knowledge of arts, crafts and objects (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Physical artifacts add significantly to perceptions of authenticity (Waitt, 2000) and are linked to loyalty, existential authenticity, cultural motivation and attitude (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013).

Existential authenticity is concerned with the object free aspect of activities or experiences (Handler & Saxton, 1988; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). Wang (1999) suggests existential authenticity comprises of two parts, both inter-personal as well as intra-personal feelings. Where the inter-personal part relates to natural feelings and the intra-personal to self-made feelings (see: Kim & Jamal, 2007; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Existential authenticity has been explored within the context of tourism several times (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). Waitt (2000) and Steiner and Reisinger (2006) also argue that existential authenticity relies on object-based authenticity. As well, Kolar and Zabkar (2010) found that cultural tourist 'loyalty' is driven by the convergence of cultural motivation, and perceptions of object based and existential authenticity. Recent research investigating the influence existential authenticity has on tourist motivation alludes to varying degrees of linkage between objective authenticity, attitude, loyalty and cultural motivation, and suggests the relationships between these concepts are influenced by aspects of culture and context, warranting further investigation (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013).

3.2 Engagement

Engagement is often context determined (Black, 2009; Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Higgins & Scholer, 2009; Taheri & Jafari 2012). According to Taheri et al. (2014), definitions of engagement include qualities of attachment, emotional connection, commitment and devotion. From a marketing perspective, the concept is interactive, and context variable (Hollebeek, 2011). There is a positive relationship between increasing engagement and satisfying consumption experiences amongst consumers (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Illic, 2011; Higgins & Scholer, 2009), which is affected through significant variance in the level of engagement amongst consumers (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek, 2012). The extent

of engagement can be influenced by levels of knowledge (Hollebeek, 2012), motivation (Brodie et al., 2013), and consumption frequency (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). High levels of multiple motivations have been shown to impact upon both commitment to and involvement with service offerings (Kumar et al., 2010; Sui, Zhang, Dong, & Kwan, 2013; Taheri et al., 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2010), while levels of consumer knowledge have been shown to affect loyalty and engagement in consumption behavior (Baloglu, 2001; Ho, Lin, & Chen, 2012). Consumer engagement differs from consumer involvement (Abdul-Ghani et al., 2011). Where involvement pertains to the interest of the consumer in a product or service, engagement suggests a deeper level of commitment and interest in a two-way relationship within a market (Abdul-Ghani et al., 2011). The authors echo Taheri et al.'s (2014) call for advancing knowledge about the visitor engagement concept and applying this to other research settings. Also, research exploring the relationship between engagement and authenticity is lacking, yet engagement's constituent elements indicate a potentially significant relationship between two types of authenticity and visitors' level of commitment and interaction with heritage offerings. Further exploration will help illuminate understanding in this area.

3.3 Loyalty

Loyalty involves repurchase intentions of consumers regarding products or services and the outcomes of consumer decision making processes (Zhou et al., 2013). Loyalty is widely regarded as a two dimensional concept, comprised of behavioral loyalty; "…repeat purchase intention." (Zhou et al., 2013 p.103) as well as attitudinal loyalty to a service; "…a person's favorable feeling about a destination" (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Pritchard & Howard, 1997; Zhou et al., 2013). In a tourism context, loyalty is more difficult to investigate due to increased costs to consumers to re-consume as well as the use of one-off service recovery strategies rendering generalized data less effective (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013).Current research on loyalty in a tourism context has explored its relationship to perceived value, motivation, image, authenticity and attitude (Gronholdt, Martensen, & Kristensen, 2000; Poria et al., 2003; Yu & Littrell, 2003; Zhou et al., 2013). For example, Kolar and Zabkar (2010) found that there is positive link between authenticity and loyality. Further examination will help illuminate understanding in this area.

3.4 Preconceived notions

Cultural motivation is used to understand tourist behavior (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Poria et al., 2003). The cultural tourist is someone whom is likely to attend local festivals, performances, historical sites, museums and art galleries (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; McKercher, 2002). Cultural tourism involves host population contact, engagement with heritage sites and consumption of indigenous culture (Lynch, Duinker, Sheehan, & Chute, 2011; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Thus, cultural motivation includes both aspects, pertains to an interrelated cluster of culture, history

and heritage (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), is intrinsically focused (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Yoon & Uysal, 2005) and impacts upon both serious cultural tourists, as well as the less culturally engaged resulting in higher loyalty (Hughes, 2002; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; McIntosh, 2004). It is shown to impact upon both object-based and existential authenticity (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013).

Serious leisure has been developed to mean "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for a participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge" (Stebbins 1992, p. 3). It has been used as a framework to examine a variety of leisure activities however it has rarely been considered in a touristic context (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013). Serious leisure includes six qualities that distinguish it from casual leisure; the need to persevere, activities sometimes leading to careers, application of effort to developing skills and knowledge, receiving long lasting benefits, identification between practitioner and the activity, and the construction of a social world connected to the activity which exudes a unique ethos (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Brown, 2007; Gould, Moore, McGuire & Stebbins 2008; Stebbins, 1982, 1992, 1999). Gould et al. (2008) develop the Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure (SLIM) as an assessment tool and expand upon the previous definitional qualities of serious leisure, extending this into 18 sub-dimensions and 54 operational points (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013). The multiple motivation benefits of serious leisure can help to predict engagement and authenticity (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Stebbins, 2008; Taheri et al., 2014).

McDonald (2011) identifies six heritage related behaviors which are intangible, often personal, and tend to be ignored in relational terms: existential and object-based authenticity through visiting a heritage site, watching a TV show relating to a heritage site, reading a book relating to heritage, attending a cultural festival or event, taking a tourist holiday, and playing an active role in heritage protection. McDonald (2011) also suggests there is a strong emotional link between a population and its heritage concerning loyalty. These links are shown to be strengthened through heritage related behaviors; therefore understanding them can enhance effective heritage management (McDonald, 2011; Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010).

Self-connection is a cognitive and emotional link between both the individual, and the self, where the self is viewed as connected to a brand, for example a tourist attraction (Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Park et al., 2010). Brand-self connections are cultivated when a consumer is engaged with a brand viewed as important to any projects or commitments within their life (*instrumentality basis*), as well as when consumers view the brand as representative of themselves (*an identity basis*) (Mittal, 2006; Park et al., 2010). Park et al. (2010) describe how by viewing the brand as part of the self, a stronger, emotional relationship is fostered. This relationship is complex and can cultivate various

emotions, for example, reassurance through physical closeness, unease from distance and satisfaction or pride through interaction.

4.0 Methodology and research findings

A structured questionnaire included socio-demographic variables, multiple-item scales of cultural motivation (CM), serious leisure (SL), heritage-related behaviors (BRB), self-connection (SC), object-based authenticity (OA), existential authenticity (EA), loyalty (LO), engagement (Eng) (Gould et al., 2008; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; McDonald, 2011; Park et al., 2010; Taheri et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2013). The questionnaire was pilot tested with 40 respondents over a period of 14 days. Following the pilot test some items were modified and restructured in order to clarify the language used. Due to the potential violation of face validity, the authors followed the panel rating approach for each questionnaire item as either 'very representative', 'moderately representative', or 'not at all representative' of the respective constructs. The results showed the majority of items were rated as 'very representative' (85%) and the rest being rated as 'moderately representative'. As a result, all items were retained in the questionnaire.

Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with each item on a seven-point Likert scale (1 - completely disagree, 7 - completely agree). Through convenience sampling, data was collected at Miyajima's Itsukushima Shrine, Hiroshima Castle and The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto. The authors chose these venues for two reasons: all are popular visitor attractions in Japan; 2) All three sites have been considerably reconstructed in recent times for example Miyajima's Itsukushima shrine (made from wood and reconstructed multiple times), Hiroshima Castle, (destroyed by Atomic Bombing in 1945 and reconstructed in 1958), and Kyoto's Golden Pavilion (rebuilt in 1955 after arson) (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Miyajima, Hiroshima Castle, and Golden Pavilion.

Questionnaires were distributed over 5 months where Heritage site visitors were approached. A total of 805 people were surveyed, but 37 questionnaires were excluded from the sample because of incomplete responses. Thus, a sample of 768 respondents remained for the final analysis, which constitutes a 95 per cent usable

response rate. Table 1 presents the profiles of the participants. A number of respondents were aged 18-25, this can be attributed to two factors. Data was mainly gathered during weekends and the Japanese holiday period when a proportionally higher number of University and College students visit tourist sites. Secondly, it was observed that older visitors were often in large tour groups which were time constrained and not receptive to participation in the research. In Table 1 the authors define 'local' as visitors from the attraction's host area and 'non-local' as all other visitors including international tourists.

To analyze the data the authors used Partial Least Squares (PLS). Unlike co-variance based structural equation modelling (e.g., AMOS), which use the structure of latent variables, PLS is a component based approach suitable for both predictive applications and theory building (Alexander, MacLaren, O'Gorman & Taheri, 2012; Gotz, Kerstin, & Krafft, 2010; Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo & Alers, 2013). It can be modelled in formative (i.e., the indicator's cause by construct) and reflective (i.e., causality is from the construct to its indicators) modes (Chin, 2010; Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010; Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014; Taheri et al., 2014). The authors applied Taheri et al.'s (2014) formative engagement scale (As far as the authors' are aware, the only visitor engagement scale in tourism studies) in combination with reflective scales. Furthermore, following Alexander et al. (2012) and Taheri et al. (2014), the authors employed the geometric mean of the average communality and R^2, within a range of values from zero to one as overall goodness of fit (GoF) measures for PLS.

Table 1
Social Demographic Information.

Socio-demographic indicators	n	%
Gender		
Male	363	47.3%
Female	405	52.7%
Age		
18-25 year old	314	40.9%
26-35 year old	153	19.9%
36-45 year old	118	15.4%
46-55 year old	139	18.1%
56 years old or older	44	5.7%
Local or non-local		
Local	468	60.9%

Non-local	300	39.1%
Visiting group		
Alone	191	24.9%
With children	44	5.7%
With friends	246	32%
With family	263	34.2%
With an organized tour	24	3.1%

The reflective scales' (Table 2) composite reliability (ρ_{cr}) scores range from .81 to .96 above the recommended cut off of .7 (Hair et al., 2010). Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE) and the factors scored .52 and .87 once again meeting the .5 threshold suggested (Chin, 2011; Hair et al., 2010). Finally, discriminant validity of the scales was measured by comparing the square root of AVE (represented by the diagonal with inter-construct correlations in Table 3). All appear to support the reliability and validity of the reflective scales. For the formative measure, the authors followed Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer's (2001) four-step procedure for formative scales and constructing indexes based on formative indicators: content specification, indicator specification, indicator collinearity, and external validity. The indicators were drawn from a review of the relevant literature in order to capture the scope of engagement (Taheri et al. 2014). The authors checked the multicollinearity among the indicators. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to assess multicollinearity (Table 2). The results show minimal collinearity among the indicators, with VIF of all items ranging between 1.55 and 2.33, below the common cut off of 5. As a result, the assumption of multicollinearity is not violated (Chin, 2010). For the external validation, the authors examined whether each indicator could be significantly correlated with a 'global item' that summarizes the spirit of engagement scale. Therefore, the authors used an additional statement: 'I have engaged with the heritage sites in my visit.' Table 4 shows all indicators significantly correlated with the statement; consequently, all indicators were included in the study (Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011). After following the systematic four-step approach, engagement can be regarded as a valid formative measurement instrument.

Table 2
Assessment of the measurement model.

Path	Mean (SD)	Weights / loadings	Scales	VIF/Reliability
CM → Relax mentally	4.68(1.54)	.686*	Cultural	α = .83,

CM → Discover new places and things	4.53(1.63)	.696**	Motivation (Reflective) (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010)	AVE = .55, ρ_{cr} = .87
CM → Be in a calm atmosphere	4.92(1.54)	.760*		
CM → Increase my knowledge	4.62(1.69)	.745**		
CM → Have a good time with friends	5.41(1.52)	.699*		
CM → Visit cultural attractions	4.90(1.70)	.727**		
CM → Visit historical attractions	5.30(1.58)	.800**		
CM → Interest in history	4.69(1.73)	.782**		
CM → Religious motivation	3.61(1.88)	.855**		
SL → Visiting this site is an enriching experience for me	5.01(1.69)	.798**	Serious Leisure (Reflective) (Taheri et al., 2014; Gould et al. 2008)	α = .91, AVE = .62, ρ_{cr} = .93
SL → Visiting this site allows me to display my knowledge and expertise on certain subjects	4.17(1.84)	.760**		
SL→ Visiting this site helps me to express who I am	4.00(1.79)	.761**		
SL→ Visiting this site has a positive effect on how I feel about myself	4.47(1.73)	.855**		
SL→ I get a lot of satisfaction from visiting this site	5.09(1.70)	.814**		
SL→ Visiting the site is a lot of fun	5.37(1.57)	.761**		
SL → I find visiting this site a refreshing experience	5.06(1.77)	.803**		
SL → Visiting this site allows me to interact with others who are interested in the same things as me	4.19(1.86)	.805**		
HRB→ Visited a Japanese heritage site	3.75(.94)	.707**	Heritage-related behaviors (Reflective) (McDonald, 2011)	α = .73, AVE = .52, ρ_{cr} = .81
HRB→ Watched a TV show related to Japan's heritage	3.70(1.13)	.714**		
HRB→ Read a book or article related to Japan's heritage	3.32(1.15)	.778**		
HRB→ Attended any cultural festival or event	3.15(1.13)	.798**		
HRB→ Taken a holiday within Japan and far	3.00(1.19)	.725**		

east				
HRB→ Played an active role in the heritage protection of something (e.g., attending meetings, submitted nomination forms)	3.47(1.08)	.729**		
OA→ The overall architecture and impression of the building inspired me	4.47(1.82)	.889**	Object-based authenticity (Reflective)	α = .88,
OA→ I liked the peculiarities about the interior design/furnishings	4.48(1.73)	.887**	(Kolar & Zabkar, 2010)	AVE = .75,
OA→ I liked the way the site blends with the attractive landscape/scenery/historical ensemble/town, which offers many other interesting places for sightseeing	4.70(1.68)	.903**		ρ_{cr} = .92
OA→ I liked the information about the site and found it interesting	4.11(1.75)	.786**		
EA→ I liked special arrangements, events, concerts, celebrations connected to the site	3.67(1.67)	.713**	Existential authenticity (Reflective)	α = .88,
EA→ This visit provided a thorough insight into this cultural heritage site's historical era	3.92(1.73)	.874**	(Kolar & Zabkar, 2010)	AVE = .63,
EA→ During the visit I felt connected with the related history, legends and historical personalities	4.13(1.85)	.882**		ρ_{cr} = .91
EA→ I enjoyed the unique religious and spiritual experience	3.54(1.78)	.797**		
EA→ I liked the calm and peaceful atmosphere during the visit	4.74(1.79)	.781**		
EA→ I felt connected with human history and civilization	4.34(1.79)	.830**		
SC→ This cultural site is part of you and who you are	3.33(1.75)	.942**	Self-connection (Reflective)	α = .85,
SC → You feel personally connected to this cultural site	3.19(1.64)	.924**	(Park et al., 2010)	AVE = .87,
				ρ_{cr} = .93
LO → I would like to visit this place again	5.47(1.75)	.847**	Loyalty	α = .95,

LO → I would like to recommend this place to friends and relatives	5.18(1.77)	.895**	(Reflective)	AVE = .77,
LO → I am willing to visit a similar place again in the future	5.11(1.75)	.824**	(Zhou et al., 2013)	ρ_{cr} = .96
ENG1:Using (interactive) panels →ENG	2.93(1.81)	-.637**	Engagement (Formative)	2.33
ENG2: Using guided tour → ENG	2.23(1.68)	.517**		1.67
ENG3: Using videos and audios →ENG	2.52(1.66)	.330**	(Taheri et al., 2014)	1.55
ENG4: Using social interaction space →ENG	2.94(1.77)	.491**		2.10
ENG5: Using my own guide book and literature →ENG	2.67(1.76)	.130*		1.80
ENG6: Seeking help from staff → ENG	2.45(1.65)	-.155**		1.90
ENG7: Playing with materials such as toys, jigsaw puzzle and quizzes → ENG	2.29(1.61)	-.393**		2.10
ENG8: Using the on-site online facilities → ENG	2.59(1.80)	-.510**		1.83

Non-standardized coefficients; *p < 0.10; **p < 0.05; n.a. Not applicable

Table 3
Latent variables correlation matrix (reflective measures).

	CM	ENG	EA	HRB	LO	OA	SC	SL
CM	**.74**							
ENG	-.33	**n.a.**						
EA	.58	-.17	**.80**					
HRB	.35	-.12	.43	**.72**				
LO	.58	-.21	.58	.36	**.87**			
OA	.64	.28	.64	.38	.54	**.86**		
SC	.35	.21	.65	.37	.35	.36	**.93**	
SL	.69	-.23	.55	.38	.50	.59	.45	**.78**

n.a. Not applicable.

Table 4
Test for external validity of formative measure.

Items	Spearman's rank

	correlation coefficient
ENG1	.315*
ENG2	.441*
ENG3	.456*
ENG4	.362*
ENG5	.457*
ENG6	.439*
ENG7	.419*
ENG8	.401*

*$p < 0.05$; N.B. (2-tailed).

To examine the hypotheses, the structural model (Table 5) was simultaneously tested within SmartPLS (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2005). All values of the Q^2 are positive which confirms the model's predictive relevance (i.e., if $Q^2 > 0$ the model has predictive relevance) (Chin, 2010). The modeled constructs explain 37% (Q^2= .45) of the variance in cultural motivation, 46% (Q^2= .28) of variance in object-based authenticity, 65% (Q^2= .21) of variance in existential authenticity, 30% (Q^2= .17) of variance in engagement and 46% (Q^2= .18) of variance in loyalty; the overall GoF is .62. To simplify the model only significant relationships are displayed.

Table 5
Hypothesis testing results.

Structural relations	Standardised path coefficients	Description
CM → OA	.453***	Cultural motivation has a very strong positive influence on Object-based authenticity.
CM → LO	.269**	Cultural motivation has an influence on visitor loyalty.
CM → ENG	.432***	Cultural motivation has a very strong, positive influence on visitor engagement.
CM → EA	.180*	Cultural motivation has a positive influence on visitor existential authenticity.
SL → OA	.240**	Serious leisure has a positive influence on visitor object-based authenticity.
SL → ENG	.345***	Serious leisure has a relatively strong positive influence on visitor engagement.
HRB → OA	.145**	Heritage related behavior has a positive influence on object-based authenticity.

HRB → LO	.192**	Heritage related behavior as a positive influence on visitor loyalty.
HRB → EA	.174*	Heritage related behavior has a positive influence on existential authenticity.
SC → OA	.086*	Self-connection has an incremental influence on object-based authenticity.
SC → ENG	.364**	Self-connection has a strong, positive influence on visitor engagement.
SC → EA	.444***	Self-connection has a very strong positive relationship upon existential authenticity.
OA → LO	.216**	Object-based authenticity has a positive influence on visitor loyalty.
OA → ENG	.276**	Object-based authenticity has a positive influence on visitor engagement.
OA → EA	.337***	Object-based authenticity has a strong positive relationship upon existential authenticity.
ENG → LO	.156**	Visitor engagement has a positive influence upon visitor loyalty.
EA → LO	.312**	Existential authenticity has a strong positive influence upon visitor loyalty

***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

5.0 Discussion and implications

This study sought to restore debates in the literature, which aim to develop generally applicable models of object-based and existential authenticity and their relationship with tourist engagement and loyalty to some sense of specific cultural grounding. The study takes into account the tempering effect of individual cultures on such endeavors and offers a palliative to their, at times, arbitrary zeal to generalize and universalize. It does not propose the abandonment of such endeavors to locate some points of surface-level commonality in modes of consumption across a general population, but calls for the recognition that to understand the particularities of specific nationally associated groups of tourists, attention must inevitably be brought to bear on those underlying cultural norms that influence their attitudes to and understanding of notions like "culture" and "heritage". The following paragraphs highlight the theoretical and managerial implications of this research.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This research extends recent models emerging in the literature (e.g., Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013) dealing with notions of tourists' perceptions of "object-based" and "existential" authenticity. The authors first examined them statistically as a general consumer group and refined the scales with analysis of how discreet groups of consumers are historically and culturally formed subjects, thereby reintroducing the notion of cultural and historical specificity to often over-determined studies of this kind. The discussion is organized around six overarching dimensions

drawn from the hypothesis testing: cultural motivation; serious leisure; heritage related behavior; self-connection with the site; object-based authenticity and visitor loyalty. The discussion is further refined in a series of sub-themes emerging from these (Table 5).

The authors found that the culturally specific nature of consumers as historically informed subjects, united around the notion of "Japeneseness", had measurable effects on the more general positioning of them as consumers of cultural heritage. In line with Kolar and Zabkar's (2010) findings, the authors found that cultural motivation had a very strong positive influence on object-based authenticity, but in the context of Japanese consumers. This must be further contextualized by the fact that this dimension of authenticity need not be reinforced only by direct physical provenance from the past but that the importance of site and the recognition of frequent reconstruction be integrated into this understanding (Miyazaki et al., 2002). This leads to the finding that cultural motivation had an influence on visitor loyalty (also supported by Graburn & Butler, 1995; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010) in the sense that there was little evidence that domestic tourists expect, seek or even value the presentation of the physical remnants of the heritage sites in question, yet some specifics of Japanese culture may indicate loyalty to a site based on more abstract, but no less meaningful associations with place. Reflecting upon this, the findings demonstrate that cultural motivation has a very strong, positive influence on visitor engagement in the sense that this abstract understanding of object-based authenticity does not act as a barrier to visitor loyalty but actually may enhance levels of visitor engagement (Dwayne & Tasaki, 1992). The preceding leads us to posit that attentiveness to the specific nature of consumers' own cultural grounding means that cultural motivation has a positive influence on visitor existential authenticity. Moreover, cultural motivation has an effect on existential authenticity which is consistent with Kolar and Zabkar (2010) and Chhabra et al.'s (2003) work. However, this results in contrast with Zhou et al.'s (2013) findings.

The authors found serious leisure's inclusion was validated on two counts. Serious leisure's role in motivating consumption of object-based authenticity in touristic settings was shown to be positive. Suggesting the Japanese site visitor is willing to make some degree of sacrifice in order to satisfy their quest for authentic offerings, intimating consumers' perception of Japanese object-based authenticity is not diminished by the absence of 'original' unaltered sites. Further exploring the role of serious leisure within consumers' authentic consumption, the authors found serious leisure to have a strong relationship with engagement, which builds on previous understanding of the constructs within museum and heritage settings (Taheri et al., 2014).

Advancing understanding of heritage related behaviors investigated by McDonald (2011), the authors show them to positively influence perceptions of object-based authenticity, loyalty and existential authenticity. Motivations of heritage related behaviors on consumption of object-based authenticity suggests consumers

motivated by heritage consider Japanese object-based authentic offerings appealing, and thus are not particularly deterred by a seeming lack of the physicality of heritage offerings. Furthermore, the authors found heritage related behaviors to have a positive influence on visitor loyalty, implying consumers motivated to visit a site for heritage consumption have the propensity to become loyal, repeat, and protective visitors. Finally, the authors found heritage related behavior to be related to existential authenticity. The authors expected existential rather than object-based authenticity to display a stronger relationship to heritage related behaviors, attributed to the Japanese context and the comparative physical newness of many touristic offerings (Jimura, 2011).

Self-connection was found to have positive relationships with object-based authenticity, engagement and existential authenticity to varying degrees. Self-connection was shown to have an incremental influence upon object-based authenticity. The emotional, personal nature of self-connection (Park et al., 2010), particularly within the Japanese context, would lead one to expect its relationship with object-based authenticity to be weak. On the other hand, within the context, where object-based authenticity may be perceived as lacking, these results could be viewed as relatively significant. Therefore, further research on the relationship between these constructs would help frame the significance of these results. The authors further posit that self-connection has a strong influence on visitor engagement. This correlates with the notion of self-connection fostering a strong relationship to the extent where the brand, or in this case visitor attraction, become closely linked (Mittal, 2006; Park et al., 2010). Furthermore, unease at distance from the brand or attraction can be mitigated, and enhancement of self through close proximity to the brand or attraction can be maximized through frequent engagement.

With consideration of the aforementioned finding regarding a weak, but nonetheless positive and potentially significant relationship between self-connection and object-based authenticity, the authors posit that self-connection has a very strong positive relationship with existential authenticity. As already discussed, this indicates consumers are not solely dependent on physical authenticity but are also influenced by inter and intra-personal feelings towards experiences and activities (Wang, 1999). Here, the strength of inter-personal feelings in formulating perceptions of authenticity is shown to be significant within a Japanese context.

The authors are able to strongly posit that object-based authenticity has a positive influence on visitor loyalty where the latter notion of such is deepened and augmented by abstract, collective and not simply material associations with heritage sites (Ehrentraut, 1993). These results are supported by previous studies (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). In turn, this point allows us to put forward the proposition that object-based authenticity has a positive influence on visitor engagement in terms of certain specific Japanese cultural traits that value collective associations and are heightened by the shared awareness that the physical reality of the site is augmented by less tangible but no less meaningful awareness of the

importance of place (Jimura, 2011). Therefore, the findings support the contention that object-based authenticity has a strong positive relationship with the experience of existential authenticity and that, certainly in the Japanese context; these constructs are not only related but inseparable. This addresses one of the calls for more refined and contextually informed measures of heritage authenticity called for by Kolar and Zabkar (2010, p. 662) and calls into question the utility of Zhou et al.'s (2013, p.109) notion that there is such a thing as a "universal problem of attitudes towards traditional culture".

Visitor loyalty was shown to be influenced by both visitor engagement and existential authenticity. The positive relationship between visitor engagement and visitor loyalty suggests engaged visitors have a higher propensity to be committed, emotionally connected, and even devoted to a site, thereby eliciting loyalty. As a context dependent construct (Brodie et al., 2013; Taheri et al., 2014), the authors demonstrate its validity, and potential in a Japanese setting and suggest engagement, related to two-way interactions with a site is related to visitor loyalty. Finally, the authors posit existential authenticity has a very strong influence on visitor loyalty. This concurs with previous studies demonstrating this relationship (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), however, a contextual shift to Japan shows an increase in its strength. It seems Japanese consumers' value existential authenticity experiences in as high regard as object-based alternatives, pointing to further exploration of the power of existential authenticity being required in contexts where objects are more fixed and less transient to test its impact.

5.2 Managerial implications

The study offers implications for the heritage tourism sector in terms of the productive attention that it might devote to not only understanding the actual behavior of discreet groups of tourists onsite or to merely managerial understandings of consumer "motivation", but to deeper investigation of the underlying, historically informed cultural discourses that provide the conditions within which such classifications may initially take place (Foucault, 1989, pp.136-139). Additionally, following on from the research findings, several managerial implications emerged:

(1) Characteristics of serious leisure where the consumer invests time, effort and often money are shown to result in enhanced engagement, commitment and loyalty (Stebbins, 2009; Taheri et al., 2014), suggesting facilitation of serious leisure activities amongst consumers could yield benefits to site managers.

(2) The results confirmed the expectation, with Japanese site visitors motivated by heritage related behaviors towards existential authenticity consumption. Reflecting on this, tourist managers can more readily enhance the existential authenticity offering from a touristic site than the object-based alternative.

(3) The positive relationship between heritage related behaviors and loyalty, thus, managers should encourage and facilitate heritage related behaviors with a view towards fostering loyalty.

(4) Self-connection was positively linked to engagement; therefore, tourism planners and managers could encourage and facilitate self-connection between tourist sites and visiting consumers to enhance levels of engagement.

(5) Levels of engagement, garnered through two-way interactions with a site may contribute to visitor loyalty. Consequently, site managers can enhance engagement to foster increasing levels of visitor loyalty.

(6) The findings suggest Japanese heritage consumers value both existential authenticity and object-based authenticity highly, visitor attraction management could augment current marketing strategies to capitalize on this accordingly.

(7) Object-based authenticity and engagement play a vital central role in the model which can be helpful for mangers. Cultural motivations, serious leisure, heritage-related behavior and self-connection are directly related to object-based authenticity and visitors' level of engagement which can be used for market segmentation purposes.

(8) From a managerial perspective, increasing object-based authenticity will positively influence loyalty, engagement and existential authenticity which are an important part of tourism's operational values and strategic place marketing management. Furthermore, many heritage and tourism sites in various countries make great efforts to engage their visitors. Tourist service providers are also urged to enhance visitors' level of engagement (Taheri & Jafari, 2012; Taheri et al., 2014) with their service offerings which can play important role in visitors' loyalty and value creation (Sui et al., 2013).

5.3 Limitations and future research

Although a review of the literature highlighted potential cues visitors use in evaluating the authenticity of engagement with, and consequently their loyalty towards the place, only some factors emerged with significant results in the model. This represents a limitation of this study but also opens further avenues for future research. Secondly, the use of PLS has some limitations. Further study of authenticity and engagement may require a combination of several methodological approaches e.g., in-depth interviews with visitors and managers. Thirdly, future research might also examine whether the strength of the preconceived notions is reflected at different stages of the conceptual model, each of which must be managed to strengthen tourism sites' brand equity.

This study has explored perceptions of authenticity at Japanese visitor attractions. Augmentation of the context to examine how authenticity is consumed in Japanese hospitality (e.g., traditional Ryokans) and leisure (e.g., Onsens) settings

could yield useful insights. Finally, it would be interesting to do a comparison study between two or more different East Asian countries by applying the conceptual framework developed in this study. Visitors' object-based authenticity, existential authenticity and engagement evaluation may also vary across cultures so it would be relevant to examine the dimensions that are shared among different cultural and national groups. Such dimensions may have implications for managing attractions across cultures and extend the generalizability of the model. Therefore, the authors would like to invite future research, applying and extending this model in other research settings and countries

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