

## **A Critical Evaluation of the Factors that Influence Visitor Engagement with U.K. Slavery Heritage Museums: A Passive Symbolic Netnographic Study**

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**Abstract :** Despite minor theoretical contributions in slavery heritage tourism research that have commented on the demand-side perspective, visitor behavior and engagement with slavery heritage attractions remain unexplored. Thus, there is a need for empirical studies and theoretical knowledge to understand visitor engagement with slavery heritage attractions, particularly U.K. slavery heritage museums. The purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate the factors that influence visitor engagement with U.K. slavery heritage museums. This qualitative research utilizes a passive symbolic ethnographic methodology. Seven U.K. slavery heritage museums will be used to collect data through unobtrusive internet-mediated observations of TripAdvisor reviews and online semi-structured interviews with managers and curators. Preliminary findings indicate that social media, prior knowledge, multiple motivations, cultural capital, and the design and layout of exhibits influence visitor engagement with slavery heritage museums. This research contributes to an understanding of visitor engagement with U.K. slavery heritage museums. The findings of this paper will provide insights into the factors that influence visitor engagement with U.K. slavery heritage museums to managers, curators, and decision-makers responsible for designing and managing those attractions. Therefore, the results of this paper will enable museum professionals to better manage visitor engagement with slavery heritage museums.

**Keywords :** museums, netnography, slavery, visitor engagement

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