

Experiential Learning Through Walking Tours: An Innovative Approach to Enhancing Cultural Understanding and Sustainability Awareness in Higher Education

Li-Jiuan Tsay

Department of Applied English, Ming Chuan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Abstract:

This study explores the educational value of walking tours as an experiential learning strategy for promoting cultural understanding and sustainable tourism awareness among university students. Grounded in Kolb's experiential learning theory, the research investigates how direct engagement with local cultural environments enhances students' learning experiences beyond traditional classroom settings. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to examine three dimensions: experiential learning engagement, cultural understanding, and sustainable tourism awareness. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 32 university students and semi-structured interviews conducted with six students enrolled in a cultural studies-related course. Participants took part in a guided walking tour of a local cultural district. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed generally positive perceptions across all three dimensions. Cultural understanding ranked highest, followed by experiential learning engagement and sustainable tourism awareness. Findings from the interviews were consistent with the questionnaire results, further supporting the positive educational impact of experiential learning. The findings suggest that walking tours effectively connect theoretical knowledge with authentic cultural contexts, enhance students' appreciation of local heritage, and foster awareness of environmentally responsible tourism practices. The study highlights the potential of experiential learning through walking tours as a pedagogical tool for integrating cultural education and sustainability in higher education. Future research is recommended to include larger samples and longitudinal approaches to gain deeper insights into students' learning experiences and the long-term educational outcomes of experiential activities.

Keywords:

Experiential learning, walking tours, cultural tourism, cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, higher education, cultural understanding.