



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE SYMPOSIUM 2024





HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING HERITAGE FROM 1960 TO CONTEMPORARY TIMES. INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES TO CONNECT WITH AUDIENCES IN PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL DOMAINS IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

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Abstract

The concept of cultural, industrial manufacturing heritage has different things to different groups of scholars and the public whether factories, workers, and social living forms an integrated part of cultural tourism. Changes associated with urban growth and the way of life is an area of interpretation as the tourists invariably want to know everything about the working lives of the islanders and destination travel. After the Second World War, Malta experienced a profound transformation of industrial landscapes by way of industrial estates,

and industrial heritage approaches are required to connect with audiences both if the factories are visited physically and, if not possible, visited digitally online on company websites as these are visible only from the exterior while on coach tours. The study shall analyse five company sites, interpret their value and significance of post-industrial heritage, and see what works with existing visitor's centres and how sites where company tours are executed and interpreted and new innovative

virtually in digitalisation through company websites. The case studies would capture the historical timelines from the 1960s to date, the owner and worker perceptions in industrial management and the working life, the factory blueprints and its location in the industrial estate, machinery, and production. Research data were collected by interviews using an oral History information form. The interviews were held in September 2022 as a pilot and followed by interviews, between February and July 2023, with key players from five selected manufacturing industries. Through this example, the study would apply the principles of interpretation practically how this heritage can connect with all audiences enchantingly through storytelling and “bell ringing” when the visitor’s cognitive knowledge like global brand names and their perception of the deindustrialization of their industrial heritage back home, both locally and abroad in their own countries. Intended and emerging themes of narratives were derived.



HISTORY IN SCALE: MILITARY DIORAMAS AS AN INTERPRETATION DEVICE WITHIN A MUSEUM

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Abstract

The effectiveness of a miniature historical diorama in a museum setting is the focus of this study. The diorama, designed and built by the researcher, is a miniature interpretation of a gun battery operated by the Maltese insurgents against the French in Għargħar (Malta) during the French Blockade of 1798-1800. The literature, reviewed from a post-colonial and collective memory perspective, highlighted the value of habitat dioramas in engaging visitors' attention and the challenges to place them in contemporary museums, however there is still a knowledge gap on the function of historical miniature dioramas in these memory institutions. A thematic diorama representing a particular Maltese historical era that is influenced by collective memory was created as practice-led research by the author using Paine's (1980) storytelling techniques. Primary data from local model makers and museum professionals on dioramas was gathered through interviews and analysed. The museum visitor's responses to the interpretive experience and storytelling skills of this museum diorama also sampled and analysed. It was concluded that a historical diorama with an interpretative narrative based on combining research and artistic values will appeal to viewers of many age groups if it integrates Tilden's (1957) principles of interpretation and Falk's (2013) approach of identifying museum visitors. If the right scale of a miniature diorama is planned in accordance with a balanced set of research and creative standards, it can engage museum visitors. A

well-designed diorama is still an effective museum installation and can benefit from the application of additional digital interpretive tools such as virtual reality. A physical miniature diorama designed using criteria that balance scale, art, and history, can effectively engage with a wide spectrum of viewers and can communicate a variety of narrative themes.



EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE OF FISHING IN MARSAXLOKK

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Abstract

Marsaxlokk is recognised as the largest fishing village in Malta. The aim of this research is to explore the significance of fishing by examining the multifaceted impacts of fishing methods on the fishing community. The study seeks to assess the influence of technology advancements and aquaculture on the fishing industry. The research was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews with people who contribute directly or indirectly to the fishing industry. Findings from the research show that fishing still remains important in Marsaxlokk; however, other aspects such as the open market and restaurants are becoming as equally important. Fishing methods utilised by fishermen affect the taste of fish, the timing of the village's feast celebrations, sports activities and more. From the study it was also denoted that technology contributes greatly to fishing, not only to enhance the fishing methods used by fishermen, but to also increase their security when out at sea. Fish farm cages attract dolphins posing a challenge to fishermen as they cause tears in trammel nets to eat the best captured fish. Nonetheless, the research indicates a positive collaboration between fish farmers and fishermen exists.



MEDIEVAL MAYHEM IN MDINA DURING THE 15TH CENTURY

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Abstract

“Chaos isn’t a pit. Chaos is a ladder.” GOT

Game of Thrones (GOT), a medieval fantasy series, has pierced the hearts of not just the “chain mail and swords” fans, but has proved to be “deeper than swords”, through captivating a world-wide and diversified audience, all interested in discovering who exactly will survive, and win the “Iron Throne”. Hence, it’s no surprise that local GOT film location tours, are a top attraction and include Mdina, a prominent GOT filming location for several key moments.

Yet, fascinated by both GOT and the Medieval period, an obvious question kept besieging and battering the researcher’s mind resulting in the central proposed research question: In what ways can a real dramatized 15th Century “Game of Thrones” exist in Mdina?

Thus, creating two sub-specific questions being the objective of this research which ultimately sums of the title and main research question of this study:

- Where in Mdina can places of interest, real local characters and events be linked to mirror and recreate the dramatic power struggles and turbulence from Game of Thrones?
- How desirable and commercially feasible is a specialty niche tour in costume that focuses on a real-life medieval Game of Thrones?

The objective was achieved through examining all available literature during a particular chaotic 10-year period in Malta's medieval history, using general medieval history for context, as well as questionnaires to assess feasibility. The general findings encapsulate the same struggles faced in GOT, only with real local characters, suggesting a real power struggle in Malta, relatively unique to the normally associated medieval conflicts.

Our Maltese nobles, rather than your stereotypical landlubbers; nobles in their grey castles, in some dark clouded misted location, are actually corsairs and galley captains "par excellence" in a sunny, colourful Malta albeit chaotic giving a unique Mediterranean flair. Over 100 participants surveyed as potential clients are keen to discover how during 15th Century Malta, Chaos was indeed not a pit, but a ladder.

The conclusion reached is that the Maltese period 1420 to 1430 is just as epic as the GOT fantasy epic, but more importantly the research implies that despite a number of grey areas in regards to scalability as a business and material available, a viable concept exists, together with relevant locations in Mdina. These findings encourage the researcher to "set sail" in creating a niche Medieval Guided Tour with a twist to cater for a universal audience whilst not going too niche.

Anchors Aweigh.



RELIGIOUS STATUARY IN THE STREETS OF VALLETTA: A STUDY ON THEIR PURPOSE, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND POPULAR DEVOTION BETWEEN THE MID-18TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES.

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Abstract

Statues of saints are mostly erected in streets as a sign of devotion to that particular saint; they also increase and enhance the prestige of the religious order or parish he/she is affiliated with.

This study aims to delve deeper into the meaning and purpose of religious statuary in the streets of Valletta with a focus on the area between Merchants Street and Saint Ursula Street encompassing the parishes of Saint Paul's Shipwreck and Our Lady of Porto Salvo.

Various authors have written about the aesthetic and religious devotional aspect of the statues but not much has been written on the messages being conveyed by the religious institutions which erected them. This qualitative research will address this lacuna and will further analyse the religious statuary as a means to communicate ideas that go beyond their devotional value.

A guided tour will be produced to complement this research. Religious tourism is gaining popularity, and such a tour will address this need in the market. Moreover, it will provide an alternative tour route in Valletta, this way decreasing possible bottleneck areas along standard routes.



LINKING REAL-LIFE FEMALE DRAMAS IN EARLY MODERN BIRGU TO COSTUMED ENACTMENTS

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Abstract

Research on women's lives in Malta is on the rise, however, to date a study that focuses on female narratives specifically linked to the town of Birgu in early modern times is lacking. An animated costumed tour based on this study offers a creative educational and entertaining experience where elements of our cultural and historical heritage can be revisited and shared through drama. This study merges select biographies of early modern women with a study on period female clothes and drama. The research and subsequent dramatized tour emerging from this research will be offered to schools, travel agencies and destination management companies as an addendum to the classical Birgu tour or as a unique stand-alone 1.5-hour animated tour. This study explored some facets of women's lives in early modern Birgu. The question guiding this research is, can the real-life dramas of some women in early modern Birgu be dramatized and used to inform people on the lives and times of some past females?



WITCHCRAFT AND LEGENDS IN VITTORIOSA AND COSPICUA

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Abstract

This study focuses on the potential to attract tourists towards the cities of Vittoriosa and Cospicua by using tales of witchcraft and legends.

To strengthen the analysis, several professionals from the tourism industry as well as experts on the topics of witchcraft and legends were interviewed.

From the literature, it was evident that there is ample material relating to legends and witchcraft to attract tourists to Vittoriosa and Cospicua. It was also possible to plan a half day tour following the literature studies. It has been uncovered that people would be intrigued with such topics, as they are not commonly found within the tourism market.

Nonetheless, the study also determined that other topics are not to be excluded. Furthermore, when promoting the cities, there must be a diversity since people have different motivations and likings.



THE HOLISTIC POTENTIAL OF SIGGIEWI AND ITS ENVIRONS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AS A TREKKING TOURIST DESTINATION

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the perceptions of potential hikers with regards to the areas of Siggiewi as a potential hiking destination. Potential hikers were identified and invited to participate in a focus group sessions. Questions put in the session sought to understand what improves and hinders the viability and attractiveness of hiking in Siggiewi, while also seeking the perceptions on how it can be improved. Literature was also sought to assess for perceptions about hiking in similar areas and what attractions and benefits they share with Siggiewi. This study indeed found Siggiewi to be perceived as a potentially attractive hiking destination thanks to its cultural and natural heritage. Obstacles to hiking in Siggiewi share similarities to those encountered in local literature, such as land use and the conservation of natural environment. Crucially, improving awareness about the viability of hiking was perceived as a medium to protect and improve the situation of hiking in Siggiewi.



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