

Article

Sustainable Management of Popular Culture Tourism Destinations: A Critical Evaluation of the Twilight Saga Servicescapes

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Abstract: Popular culture tourism destinations are made up of constructed realities transforming local communities into fictional servicescapes. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the unpacking of a key concept (servicescape), applied to destination management, can support the transition to sustainable destination development in the face of popular culture tourism. The aim is to unpack the servicescape concept by exploring how it is constructed focusing on Twilight Saga representations and production processes at four destinations. The data consists of photographs and video clips of the servicescapes and interviews with key stakeholders. The findings support previous servicescape research dimensions and elements but also identify critical areas of power, control, and conflict when introducing a process approach to the servicescape concept. The study provides insights into the complex exchanges that take place in the development of servicescapes at popular culture tourism destinations. The study thereby contributes to an elaborated and holistic servicescape model, stressing the importance of strategic design and local stakeholders' early involvement in the preproduction of popular culture tourism phenomena.

Keywords: servicescape; popular culture; sustainable tourism management; destination management; niche tourism; media-driven tourism

1. Introduction

A substantial part of international tourism is stimulated by the consumption of popular culture and considered a road to success by many tourist destinations worldwide [1–4]. This form of tourism is often used as a destination management strategy to diversify destinations' tourism products [5]. However, there are a number of issues calling for further research about the impacts of popular culture tourism and how it best should be sustainably managed [6,7]. The fictional nature of popular culture tourism, its convergence between different genres (e.g., literature and film) together with advanced information and communication technologies, brings the critical issue of “placelessness” to a head [1]. Further, media-driven tourism, such as screen tourism, highlights the reality that the tourism sector is global (glocal) and cannot be separated from other economic sectors at any geographical scale.

Managing tourism destinations sustainably is complex in times where many communities are struggling with both overtourism and undertourism and even more so in the face of an increased demand for niche tourism, such as popular culture tourism, challenging the identity of place [5]. This calls for destination management applying a holistic approach and broader place-making and governance strategies. Such management stresses the importance of advanced networks of stakeholders and inter-sectorial collaborations [2,8–10] as well as enhancement of place identity and carrying

capacities [11]. As pointed out by Jamal and Camargo [12], this also includes ethical management of dilemmas such as conflicts of interest between different sustainability perspectives (e.g., growth versus protecting local values) [13,14]. Popular culture tourism destination management entails complex webs of interactions between stakeholders with shifting agendas, resources, and place attachments. The narrow definition of the tourism industry, the lack of collaboration between the tourism and the cultural sectors, risk creating a problematic lock-in, hampering sustainable destination management [8].

Consequently, in this paper the transformation of place, construction of spaces, and the stakeholder interactions in the production process behind are of specific relevance. We are specifically focusing on one of the key concepts guiding thoughts and actions [15] in tourism destination management—the tourism servicescape concept. Together with related concepts applying the suffix ‘-scape,’ e.g., *tourismscape* and *experiencescape*, the purpose of these concepts is to demonstrate the fluidity, irregularity, and subjectivity of natural and human landscapes [16] (p. 33ff). Within tourism studies, the importance of space in the construction of tourism experiences has been highlighted both in the field of business studies and in so-called “new” critical tourism research. For example, the concept of *tourismscape* was introduced to address the genesis of complex interactions between people, place, organizations, and objects, extending *tourismscapes* in space and time and the performance of space [17]. As pointed out by Foucault [15], concepts are fundamental codes of a culture with a temporal structure and a sociopolitical function [18]. Consequently, unpacking the servicescape concept in the face of growing popularity of popular culture tourism provides important insights into how the concept might support or confine the transition to sustainable destination management. Berenskoetter is referring to unpacking as the ‘the context cake’ and the four layers of a concept that need to be scrutinized, namely the temporal context, the material context, the theoretical context, and the political context [15].

Hence, the purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the unpacking of a key concept can support the transition to sustainable destination management. We use the concept of servicescape and the empirical example of tourism in the wake of popular culture to propose the adaptation of an established marketing concept/tool to sustainable destination management. The aim is to unpack the servicescape concept by exploring how it is constructed, focusing on its representations and the production processes behind it.

As pointed out by, for example, Johnstone [19] and Clarke and Schmidt [20], the legacy of the marketing management field offers a highly developed theory of servicescape, yet it is argued that the concept suffers from a too narrow understanding of place, providing a limited analytical tool when applied to a sustainable tourism context. That is, despite its valuable contribution to physical aspects of the service experience, it is here argued that this strand of research fails to explain the transitional practices of servicescapes. For example, the concept neglects to capture what was coined by Urry [21] as the ‘tourist gaze,’ describing the expectations of tourists, searching for authentic experiences, and their consequences on (heritage) commodification of place.

A recent review of the servicescape literature by Tasci and Pizam revealed that previous research within the field is lacking in terms of relevance related to cocreation, coproduction/codestruction, and transformation. This is to the detriment of stakeholder outcomes [22]. In their more holistic review of the *experiencescape*, Pizam and Tasci emphasized that cultural and natural components of the traditional servicescape have been overlooked in research. In addition to this, previous research has fallen short in including a broader stakeholder perspective beyond the conventional consumer perspective [23]. Furthermore, they concluded that the field would benefit from a multidisciplinary approach in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the concept. In the few cases where sustainability has been under study in recent servicescape research, the focus has mainly been on understanding environmental aspects such as biodiversity [24,25] or sustainability interpreted as customer loyalty [26,27].

However, starting with the origin of servicescape concept, one of the first definitions of servicescapes (denoted *atmospherics* at the time) is Kotler’s (p. 50): “design [of] buying environments

to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his [or her] purchase probability.” Kotler’s research on atmospherics was based on store environments. Kotler concluded that customers perceive the store atmosphere through visual (e.g., lighting, color, proximity), aural (e.g., music, noise), tactile (e.g., cleanliness), and olfactory (scent) cues in the environment [28]. In 1992, Bitner further developed the concept in service settings and introduced the term *servicescape*, which was defined as: “All of the objective physical factors that can be controlled by the firm to enhance (or constrain) employee and customer actions” [29] (p. 65).

Bitner went on to describe the servicescape as a manmade environment, excluding natural or social environments. Her framework divides the perceived servicescape into ambient conditions (e.g., temperature, air quality, music, noise, odors), space/function (i.e., the spatial layout and its functionality), and signs, symbols, and artifacts (i.e., décor and signage). Bitner’s work on servicescapes primarily focused on customer satisfaction as a result of stimuli or cues in the service environment. At the individual level, she presented three aspects in which consumers are affected by servicescapes: cognitive, emotional, and physiological. The cognitive reaction is caused by nonverbal stimuli in the environment that may communicate the nature of the service or the company’s image [29]. The emotional (i.e., affective) and physiological reactions may affect consumers’ attitudes and behavior; the latter in the form of comfort or discomfort, as a result of interactions with ambient elements of the servicescape [30,31].

Another early influential servicescape framework is Baker’s categorization of elements into ambient, design, and social factors [32]. Baker’s ambient factors consist, in conformity with Bitner’s framework, of cues in the environment that usually only are present on a subconscious level and only noticeable if apparent in an extreme form [29]. Examples of such studies have focused on music [33–36], lighting [37–39], scent/odor/aroma [35,40], cleanliness [41,42], and temperature [43]. Baker’s second set of factors includes design elements, which can be divided into functional versus aesthetic factors [32]. The functional factors include layout, signage, and comfort. Aesthetic design factors include style, materials, scale, décor, architecture, and color; factors that consumers use to determine the attractiveness of the environment [44–46].

Baker’s [32] third set of factors are social elements or human factors—service staff and other customers who may influence customers’ cognitive and affective responses. Numerous studies have been conducted on the service staff and interactions with customers [47–50]. Focus in this field of research has been on staff behavior [51,52], staff competence [53], and aesthetic skills [54,55].

Another important contribution to servicescape research was the introduction of substantive and communicative staging [56–60]. Substantive staging refers to the physical adaption of an environment, while communicative staging refers to how the meaning of a servicescape is communicated and interpreted: “Communicative staging moves servicescape meanings from service provider to customer, between customers, and potentially at least, from customers to providers” [56] (p. 90). Arnould et al.’s [56] (p. 111) study shows that an effective communicative staging is dependent on “evoking holistic narrative themes built-up from the ambient conditions and shared cultural symbols,” together with narrative themes associated with the service experience/environment.

Through this unpacking of the servicescape concept, its shortcomings when applied to a tourism context have been exposed. Not only has mainstream research in the field focused primarily on the consumer but from a positivistic perspective and thereby defined the consumer as a passive object. By doing so, it has also overlooked the broader stakeholder perspective. Furthermore, this approach has resulted in the notion of place as a measurable objective thing. Consequently, the relationship between people and place is weak in the mainstream tourism servicescape research [61,62].

The research presented in this paper adds a spatial twist to the servicescape concept by drawing upon the notion of ‘spatialization’ and incorporating the influence of space and place in the (re)production of social reality. Following the legacy of the so-called spatial turn in social sciences [14,63], the production of tourism servicescapes is defined as a process of transformation of places (cultural and natural landscapes) into tourist spaces/destinations. This transformation of

place is seen as socially constructed and deeply sociospatial, as opposed to mainstream servicescape research in which the physical context is treated as a static and objective entity. Therefore, it is here argued that the process of tourism development should be understood as a discursive process of space production. As such, the discourses of a tourist destination are socially and historically produced with meaning and practices. Discourses are, on the one hand, power structures, and on the other hand, manifestations of these structures. Consequently, they construct and transform the physical characteristics and perception of reality of the tourism destination. It refers to both nonstatic processes and the outcome of such processes. Inspired by Saarinen's [14] (p. 167) process of tourist destination transformation, a twofold conceptualization of the nature of discursive processes is here applied, i.e., the 'discourse of place' (outcome, e.g., representations) and the 'discourse of development' (process, e.g., institutional practices, policy). Following in the wake of the social constructivist paradigm [64–66], the consumers and other stakeholders are included in space production, and as such, space is a social construct determined by human interpretations and behavior [20,67]. In the case of tourism development, place is transformed into a tourism destination (i.e., spaces of leisure consumption and production) [68]. Such transformations lead to a commodification of place into leisure spaces (or tourism servicescapes), including stakeholder power relations and tourism development and management practices [14,58,69].

Furthermore, the ethical dimension of place development needs to be incorporated and scrutinized in the analysis of tourism servicescapes [12]. Since the production of space includes conflicting and hegemonic discourses, it often causes power struggles over space, both locally and with external stakeholders [14,70]. More specifically, the ethical dimension of production of tourism servicescapes, pinpoints several crucial aspects for tourism development. Firstly, the impact of tourism demand on local needs and infrastructure is risking a transformation of local communities into touristic landscapes designed for visitors only. Secondly, the crucial relationship and interplay between the tourism industry and local communities risk dependency on external stakeholders and lack of local control in tourism development. As claimed by, for example, Ateljevic, Pritchard, and Morgan [71] and Tribe [13], the ethical dimension is also highly relevant in the search for appropriate ends for more sustainable tourism marketing and management.

2. Materials and Methods

Given the dominance of quantitative consumer data collection techniques in previous servicescape research [72–78] (with a few recent exceptions [79–81]), it is here argued that new methods of data collection, units of data, and analysis are needed to broaden the servicescape concept [71,82]. Such new ways of exploring servicescapes have been conducted in this study by combining primary data in the form of visual data (photographs and videos) and in-depth interviews.

The Twilight Saga is a book and film series aimed at the young adult market, however read, seen and loved by people of all ages. As the phenomenon is based on four books and five movies, it is hereafter referred to as popular culture tourism and not screen/film tourism [83]. With the release of the fifth book in the series—Midnight Sun—in August 2020, fifteen years after the publication of the first book in the Twilight Saga epic drama, tourist numbers are expected to rise once again at locations featured in the books and films. One of these destinations is Forks, Washington, USA. Forks is a small town with approximately 3000 inhabitants, in the northwestern part of the country, and has received more than a quarter of a million Twilight Saga fans from all around the world. The town was, before the COVID-19 pandemic, gearing up for a record tourism year as a result of the release of Midnight Sun and is year-on-year reporting healthy ticket sales to their annual Twilight Saga event [84]. Forks (and its neighboring Twilight Saga destinations La Push and Port Angeles) is a so-called setting—a place portrayed in books [85,86]. Another Twilight Saga setting is a small town in Tuscany—Volterra, Italy—which is featured in the series' second installment. The Twilight Saga films have primarily been shot in British Columbia, Canada, and Montepulciano, Italy, also known as locations [85,86]. Data was collected at all four (Forks, La Push, and Port Angeles in northwestern USA clustered as one,

see Table 1) destinations, providing insights into servicescapes at destinations across the world that have attracted large numbers of tourists travelling in the footsteps of this popular culture phenomenon.

Table 1. Overview of Twilight Saga destinations.

Destination	Country	Type	Characteristics
Forks	USA	Setting	The town's economy was, until it was hit by the Twilight Saga phenomenon, primarily based on the timber industry. Their tourism industry was limited and based on local nature resources such as the rainforest in the Olympic National Park. Population numbers: 3532. Since the release of the Twilight Saga, the town has attracted more than 300,000 national and international Twilight Saga tourists. The destination offers Twilight-Saga-themed accommodation, restaurants, souvenir shops, guide tours, and maps for tourists to use at their own discretion [87].
La Push	USA	Setting	Located at the shores of the Pacific Ocean, with only 371 inhabitants, this is the home of the Native American Quileute people. It is mostly known for touristic activities such as whale watching, hiking, fishing, and surfing and now as a central setting in the Twilight Saga series. A guide tour company has acquired rights to take Twilight Saga tourists to experience the area. The most featured La Push locations in the books and most visited places by tourists are the beaches [88].
Port Angeles	USA	Setting	With a population of just under 20,000, the city is mostly known for its proximity to the Olympic National Park and its year-round ferry transportation to Victoria, Canada. Its location on the shoreline and the recreational parks attract mainly outdoor tourists. A Twilight-Saga-themed souvenir shop is located in the city center and one of the local restaurants is featured in the first Twilight Saga book and is an important attraction for fans [89].
Vancouver, British Columbia	Canada	Location	Vancouver, Canada's third largest city, is located in British Columbia, with a population of 2 million. The economy is largely based on the timber, metal and engineering, and food industries. In addition to this, British Columbia is the world's third largest production center for television and films, hence its industry name "Hollywood North." Many places in Vancouver and its neighboring areas have posed as stand-ins for Forks and La Push when used as film locations in the Twilight Saga. Its tourism industry relies to a large extent on its natural environment and its diverse culture position as the gateway to the Canadian experience. Many film tourists visit the region during filming of movies in order to participate in celebrity spotting and to visit authentic production sites. Several location tour operators are active in the region providing visitors with tours of the different film sets. These locations are either adapted environments (e.g., Twilight-Saga-themed such as film sets with purpose-built backdrops) or natural environments (built or intrinsic, where scenes have been filmed but without purpose-built backdrops such as different parts of Vancouver city central [90,91].
Volterra	Italy	Setting	Volterra, with a population of approximately 11,000, dates back to the Middle Ages and is primarily known for its culture and fine arts including alabaster handicrafts. When the time came to shoot the Italian movie sequences of the Twilight Saga, the production company opted out of filming in Volterra and chose the neighboring city of Montepulciano for (officially) aesthetic reasons. The town offers Twilight-Saga-themed tours, maps, and souvenirs [92].
Montepulciano	Italy	Location	The city, with a population of approximately 15,000, is known for its arts, fine wine, and architecture. Its medieval square was one of the reasons it was selected as a Twilight Saga film location. Another reason was its history of being a popular Italian film location. Some renowned movies filmed in Montepulciano are <i>The English Patient</i> (1996), <i>Under the Tuscan Sun</i> (2003), and <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (1999). The local economy is primarily based on tourism boosted by an award from the Touring Club Italiano, which is a national tourist organization promoting tourism destinations offering high-quality facilities. Twilight Saga tours, maps, and souvenirs are available for tourists to purchase [93].

The data collection was conducted in two parts. The first was a collection of 278 photographs and 20 video clips captured at the four destinations. The second consisted of interviews with 14 stakeholders at the destinations. The use of photographs and video clips was seen as appropriate as these units of analysis capture the material servicescapes [15] tourists encounter during their visit at the destination. This approach to exploring servicescapes has not previously been employed in servicescape research, however it is pivotal when exploring the outcome of servicescape environments. The captured

photographs and videos of servicescapes at the four destinations represent a documentation of the Twilight Saga servicescapes that a Twilight Saga tourist would encounter during a visit at the destinations. This means that photographs and video clips were taken during participation at Twilight Saga tourist activities such as guided tours, visits at the restaurants and souvenir shops, staying at Twilight-Saga-themed accommodation, etc. As such, the representativeness of the material stays true to what a Twilight Saga tourist would experience at the destinations. A large section of the data included in the sample captured servicescapes in Washington, USA ($n = 193$ photographs; 6 video clips), and this is due to the fact that the destinations included in this cluster of Twilight Saga sites offered the greatest number of Twilight Saga servicescapes compared to the other destinations (see Table 2).

Table 2. Data included in the sample.

	Forks, La Push, and Port Angeles, USA	British Columbia, Canada	Volterra, Italy	Montepulciano, Italy
Photographs	193	49	19	17
Videos	6	13	1	0

The second set of data was collected through in-depth interviews with 14 destination stakeholders, at all four Twilight Saga destinations. Stakeholders were selected based on their experience and involvement in tourism development and management in general and Twilight Saga tourism in particular at the respective destinations. In-depth interviews as a means of data collection were seen as appropriate as the analysis of photographs and video clips provided evidence for a broadening of the servicescape concept (see Table 3). This evidence suggested that the process leading to the construction of these servicescapes (outcome) is central in the contribution of a more holistic servicescape concept. In-depth interviews with destination stakeholders provided necessary insights into this process.

Table 3. Overview of stakeholder interviews.

Destination	Stakeholders
Forks, La Push, and Port Angeles, USA	Mayor/Destination developers Visitor Center (Themed) Hotel owners Restaurant owner Retail/themed souvenir shop owners Tour operators (themed) Destination developers
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada	Film commissioner Tour operator (themed)
Volterra, Italy	Mayor/Destination developers Visitor Center
Montepulciano, Italy	Mayor/Destination developers Visitor Center Tour operators (themed)

NVivo9 was employed for the analysis of data. Content analysis was conducted on both visual and interview data. As regards the former, visual analysis was also conducted addressing areas such as: *What is the image about?*; *Are there people in the image?*; *What are they doing?*; *How is the image composed?*; *What are the most important visual elements?* One researcher coded all data collected at the destinations. After coding was completed, two researchers scanned all 15 node documents and a spot-check sample of coded references was selected from all node/category documents to be discussed in detail in order to achieve coding reliability. It should be noted that the objective of this research was not to quantify the number of occurrences of a reference within a node; this, as the data represents a documentation of Twilight Saga servicescapes that a tourist would encounter during a visit at the destinations. Thusly, the purpose was to explore descriptions of node references and the relations between servicescape categories.

3. Results

3.1. Stakeholders' Power and Control in the Twilight Saga Servicescapes

In the case of the Twilight Saga, the power over popular culture tourism servicescapes involves a network of stakeholders, across time and space, creating a complex power structure challenging local destination management. Two significant power brokers are defined in the popular culture servicescape, namely the film/screen production company and the publishing company/author. The production process is clearly dominated by the financially strong film production stakeholders. The gatekeeping role in selecting where the settings (books) and locations (films) are located make the author and film industry in control of the servicescape. Not only does the creative industry stakeholder make the decisions where to locate the story/production, but it also dictates how the servicescape needs to transform in order to meet the requirements of the fictional story. These so-called “creative logics,” together with the financial resources (i.e., the budget for the film), are key determinants in the selection of settings and locations. One of the interviewees describes it:

“Generally what happens is we will be contacted, say it’s a US feature film they will be looking at a number of different locations and really it comes down to what’s in the script, so what are the creative logistics of the script and, what the budget is.”

British Columbia Film Commission

Copyright is perhaps the most significant power issue in the making of the Twilight Saga servicescapes. Interviews reveal frustration among many of the tourism developers, marketers, and local stakeholders involved in Twilight Saga tourism. As the development of product/services partly relies on copyright licensing, it can hinder local tourism stakeholders from capitalizing on the phenomenon. Copyright ownership by the film production company (as in most cases) has therefore proven to restrict local business life and entrepreneurship at the destination.

Furthermore, the interviewees describe how the Twilight Saga caused an impressive media attention, both in terms of increased publicity and an increased number of journalists visiting the destinations. Here, public relations activities play a significant role and the ‘control’ of journalists and the destination media image, through so-called familiarization trips and press releases. The stakeholders appear to be aware of (and value) the power of publicity, or as one representative from Volterra Visitor Center put it: “it is one of the cheapest marketing,” referring to the many journalists from Italy and overseas that they have offered guided tours to in the footsteps of the Twilight Saga. The interviewee reflects upon that the popularity of the Twilight Saga phenomenon many times makes public relations with journalists otiose. In fact, in Montepulciano, the rush of journalists at some points became overwhelming: “we must stop the entrance of journalists in town, because [they came] even if the municipality didn’t ask or call the journalists” (Head of PR, Montepulciano). This situation stresses the complex question of what triggers journalistic interest in certain places and phenomena. Thusly, information is defined as another powerbroker in the servicescape production process, and as a result, stakeholders in control of information are considered to possess power. One of the interviewees highlights the location managers as important information gatekeepers:

“The location managers have a big database of all the information so the more productions they use the bigger the database and the more valuable they become with the information that they have because in this business the information is power.”

Tour Operator in Vancouver

A clash of interests tends to occur between film production and tourism management stakeholders. The film industry’s protectionism and lack of interest in collaborative arrangements with the local tourism industry lead to few opportunities for the destination to capitalize on being a popular culture location and even risks exploitation. For example, a Twilight Saga tour guide with her own company received a cease and desist order from the production company’s legal department. As a result, the tour

operator had to seize the marketing of her tours. Consequently, and critical from a sustainability point of view, the clash of interest between short-term interests on the one hand, and stakeholders involved in long-term broader local development on the other hand, tends to occur.

3.2. Commodification of Place and the Conflicts between Fictional Servicescapes and Local Landscapes

The creation of representations and meanings in popular culture servicescapes results in a complex clash between anticipated images of the tourist destination and the actual images visitors experience at the location. In the case of popular culture and the Twilight Saga, the anticipated images are generated by fictional images through the story originally created by the author Stephanie Meyer and further developed by the film production company. Notably, the servicescape becomes more critical when it is based on a filmed version of the story. That is, moving images become more detailed and leave little or no space for alternative interpretations at the destination.

One conflict between the popular culture fictional images and “reality”, perhaps unique for the popular culture servicescape, is when visitors’ expectations alter between images induced by the novels and images induced by the films (see Figure 1). In the case of the Twilight Saga, the settings of the novels sometimes differ from the locations featured in the films. This tends to sometimes cause confusion and disappointment among the Twilight Saga tourists. However, in some cases the original setting of the story seems to dominate the Twilight Saga tourists’ mental image. Nevertheless, a change of location for filming might provoke residents of the local community where the story takes place, and as a result, make local marketing efforts weak.



Figure 1. Twilight Saga character Bella Swan’s car parked outside Forks Visitor Center, WA, USA. One of the car models is described in the books and the other used in the films.

The study’s results also showcase how important social aspects are in the creation of fictional images. A popular culture tourist guide’s knowledge and storytelling abilities are central for making servicescapes come alive. For example, photographs and video clips showcasing props like screen shots from movies were used by guides to assist in telling the story of film production during guided tours. This is particularly important when there are few or no physical signs left behind after a film production or when a film production is surrounded by a high level of secrecy and security (see Figure 2) during filming (as with the Twilight Saga). Then, any inside information gathered by the local tour guides as to the who, the why, and the wherefores is vital for the tourist experience of servicescapes. This is noteworthy as it adds a new dimension to existing servicescape research, as these places are not designed for tourists and often demolished as soon as the filming has come to an end.



Figure 2. Twilight Saga tourists are confronted with barriers and security staff at the site of the Swan family house film location in British Columbia, Canada. The set location was later demolished by the production company.

The level of access is important to take into account when understanding popular culture servicescape place-making. Firstly, access to a particular servicescape can be categorized from a temporal perspective. For example, some physical aspects of a servicescape can be accessed by visitors 24 h a day, 7 days a week such as, for example, signage alongside roads and public spaces as well as themed souvenir shop windows. Other servicescapes are only accessible during opening hours, for example souvenir stores and public buildings. Secondly, access can also be categorized from a monetary perspective where some servicescapes are accessible only by paying guests/participants, namely restaurants, accommodation, and guided tours. Thirdly, access can also be categorized from a physical or knowledge/information perspective. For example, some servicescapes have limited physical access due to barriers, fences, security, restrictions, or the fact that the servicescape happens to be on private property. Access to servicescapes can also be defined by level of knowledge/information of a particular place such as film locations and their related venues. Another addition to the social dimension of servicescapes at popular culture tourism destinations is the visitors playing an important part in creating a heightened experience of the servicescape. For example, visiting fans interact with each other at different attractions and share experiences and information with each other (e.g., film production details or on meeting the actors/author). Fans that travel to a destination for cosplay (i.e., dressed up as characters of the series) and/or fans re-enacting scenes from the books or films also add to a heightened or immersed experience for visitors (see Figure 3). In some cases, they even become the attraction themselves and part of the servicescape when other tourists take photographs of or together with them.

3.3. Coping with Popular Culture Tourism Issues and Sustainable Destination Management Strategies

The study reveals a number of critical aspects in the servicescape production process central to communities' ability to balance the interests of the local community with those of the powerful film industry and of the visitors. One important aspect is the level of awareness of the impacts of film tourism and strategic management to prevent negative impacts such as exploitation of the local community. Knowledge on sustainable development in general for destination management is a critical factor. Furthermore, a holistic understanding of tourism development, not only including a business perspective, is of vital importance. Evidence from the study showcased everything from complete lack of sustainability considerations to a high level of awareness of the risk of exploitation of local resources. Some of the interviews reveal how the popularity of the Twilight Saga and the demand for Twilight Saga servicescapes came as a surprise.

“No one really thought this was going to be big [. . .] We were actually not prepared to have lots of buses coming to see her [Stephanie Meyer], so we were not aware at all of this project.”

Forks Visitor Centre

In other cases, stakeholders showed an awareness of the risk of communities transforming into ‘cities of vampires’ through the production of Twilight Saga servicescapes. For example, in Volterra, one of the interviewees at the visitor center stated *“We don’t want to become a city of vampires.”* Consequently, ethical considerations and knowledge about sustainable development through tourism among DMO’s (Destination Marketing Organisation) and other stakeholders involved in tourism development are crucial for the power balance between film production interests and broader community goals. As discussed earlier, the issue of copyright ownership and protection in the making of popular culture servicescapes tend to disempower the local community. However, the study showcased examples of creative local solutions to this issue. One interesting example (and a way to avoid copyright issues) is when local stakeholders discovered the similarities between an old handicraft tradition of making alabaster artwork (e.g., apples) and the symbolic red apple of the Twilight Saga. The red alabaster apple is now used as a symbol and souvenir for local handicraft and the Twilight Saga. The interviewee at the visitor center explains this as a very sensitive and delicate process in dealing with copyright but also an excellent strategy to merge local culture with fictional servicescapes. *“We like to have something typical from here, alabaster is typical . . . but we always were very careful of not violating the copyright.”* A different, yet similar example of how local assets can be incorporated into the fictional servicescape is from Forks, where nature tourism attractions are included in the Twilight Saga servicescapes. These measures show how incorporating nonfictional elements at the destination helps sustainable destination development. As one of the interviewees at a Twilight-Saga-themed souvenir shop in Forks expressed it: *“I came for Twilight. I return for Forks.”*



Figure 3. Tourists dress up as the Twilight Saga characters. Rosalie, Alice, and Bella during their visit in Forks, WA, USA.

According to tourism stakeholders in Montepulciano, Italy, their solution to Twilight Saga copyright restrictions was that a local merchant registered copyright for “Montepulciano, City of New Moon” and later donated it to the town:

“He bought the copyright to produce a trademark that is ‘Montepulciano, City of New Moon’, città di New Moon/ . . . /but he donated it to the community of Montepulciano, so that even the Commune can use this trademark too/ . . . /we start to promote all this stuff that means T-shirts, caps, but also a wine labelled with a special . . . you know Montepulciano is famous for the Vino Nobile . . . so there was a winery that produced Vino Nobile with a special labelling referring to New Moon.”

Mayor in Montepulciano

Noteworthy, the study shows how not only the management strategies of the destination have impacts on the level of sustainability but also how the various popular culture formats tend to impact the ability to work with sustainable management. One interesting example is the case of La Push. In La Push, tourism development is especially sensitive due to the indigenous inhabitants of the community, which tourism (marketing) in the wake of the Twilight Saga risks impacting in a negative way. However, the interest in visiting La Push led to a number of arrangements to protect and involve the local Native American population in communicating the local heritage rather than the Twilight Saga narrative. The Native American population joined forces with the Forks Visitor Center to outline a number of “Code of Conducts” which all tour operators working in the area have to adhere to and inform their participants about in order to be allowed to operate in the region.

4. Discussion

In this study we have approached the critical aspect of sustainable destination management in the wake of popular culture tourism development. We have unpacked the key concept of popular culture servicescape and added a spatial twist better suited for a tourism context. The study’s visual data (photographs and video clips) of these social representations provided evidence that support previous research within the field and servicescape definitions. Evidence of the physical servicescape (spatial and nonspatial) [32], theme and story, substantive staging [56–60], and the social dimension were all evident in the data. Additionally, the visual data also provided evidence of power—conflict issues due to the lack of spatial cues and level of access to servicescapes which both impact the social elements of the servicescape. The exploration of the servicescape transitions at popular culture destinations (stakeholder interviews) identified three new areas needed in a holistic servicescape model applied to the tourism industry: (1) stakeholder power and control, (2) conflicts of interest between fictional servicescapes and the local landscapes, and (3) sustainable management strategies to cope with popular culture tourism issues. The data provided insights into the more complex relationships and exchanges that take place in the development of servicescapes at tourism destinations and thereby contribute to an elaborated and holistic servicescape model (see Figure 4).

Power and control of the processes behind the transformation of servicescapes at popular culture tourism destinations are complex, nevertheless of key importance in sustainable destination management. Unlike servicescape creation processes in many other contexts, creative industry stakeholders such as authors, publishing houses, and screen production companies all have much say in the selection and description of actual and/or fictional settings/locations. This, together with copyright ownership, make these stakeholders exceptionally powerful in the transformation of servicescapes and tourism development at these destinations. The study’s findings pinpoint the importance of securing different stakeholders’ involvement early in preproduction of the popular culture phenomenon; this by, for example, approaching creative industry stakeholders during their setting/location selection process and to help shape the description of the destination. As previous research on sustainable heritage management has pointed out, such stakeholders could include national, regional, and local authorities, different communities invested in heritage development and management, as well local experts and communities [94]. The study presented here also pinpoints the importance of strategic design of servicescapes, particularly due to the wide range of local stakeholders that are involved in the transformation of these locations. Central to the strategic design are the visitor experience, access levels, and codes of conduct for operators and visitors at these servicescapes. Thusly, the holistic and more ethical application of the servicescape concept in a popular culture tourism context presented here recognizes the importance of a strategic, long-term approach to the management of popular culture tourism servicescapes. This approach is in stark contrast to reactive responses evident at many of these destinations, resulting in loss of power, control, conflicts between stakeholders, and lack of sustainable management.

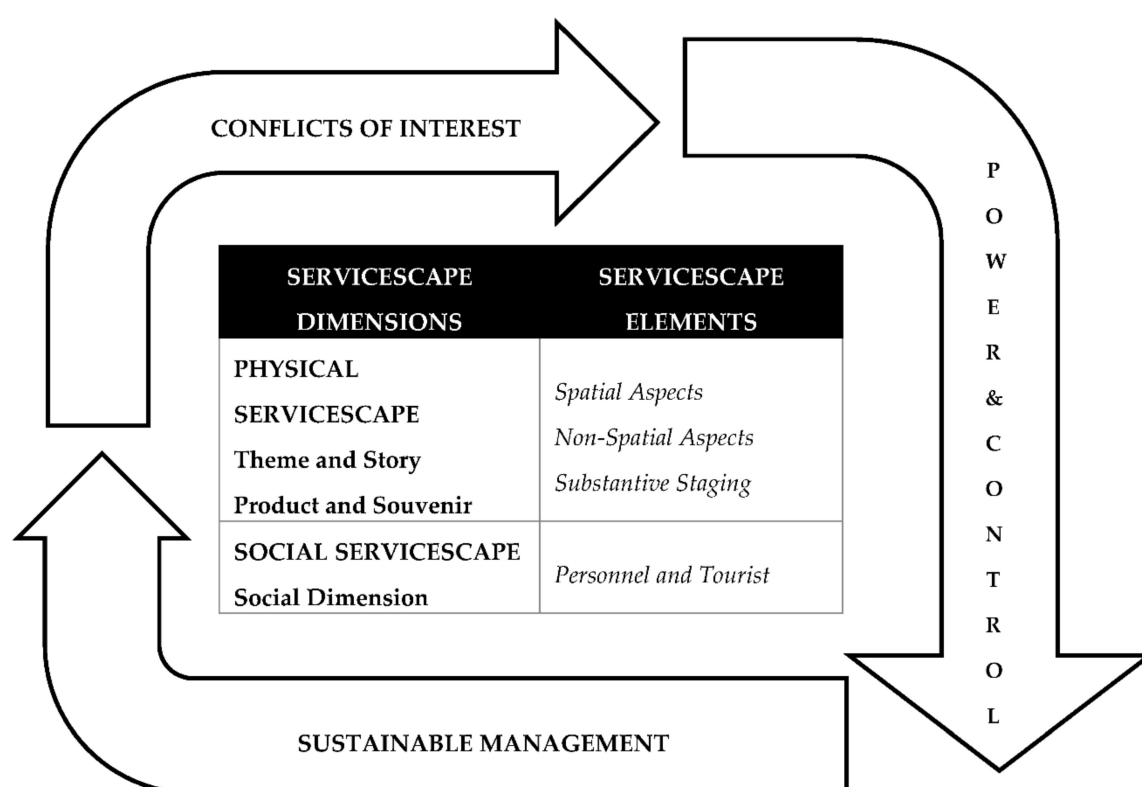


Figure 4. A holistic servicescape model for sustainable destination management.

Popular culture tourism spaces are made up by constructed realities and storytelling. As such, they are exceptionally important when attempting to understand the organic and induced, as well as socially and historically constructed symbolic systems and practices that are transforming local communities into fictional spaces of experience consumption and production [95]. In times of a growing awareness of the values and implementation of Agenda 2030 in tourism [96], a number of critical issues need to be highlighted in relation to this form of niche tourism. Furthermore, sudden and serious crises like the COVID-19 pandemic shed further light on the problematic aspects of destination development and issues of overtourism and undertourism [97]. This calls for future research looking into the transitional practices of key concepts shaping the understanding and forming the actions of popular culture tourism and how it is (un)sustainably managed in turbulent times.

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