From Edith Wharton to Marvine Howe: Travel Literature Oscillates Between Distorting the Truth and Enhancing the Tourist's Experience

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Abstract:

This research aims to deconstruct the discourse used in two distinct books on Morocco from different eras, each providing unique perspectives on the country. Edith Wharton's "In Morocco" (1917) offers insights into early 20th-century perceptions, while Marvine Howe's "Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges" (2005) presents a contemporary viewpoint. These texts are thematically analyzed alongside the real-life experiences of American travelers who have either visited Morocco or plan to do so. By understanding the motivations and reasons that lead individuals to choose Morocco as a travel destination, the study explores their expectations, assumptions, and pre-trip desires, shedding light on the lens through which they approach the country. Additionally, it investigates travelers' interpretations of Morocco's rich historical, architectural, cultural, and artistic aspects, uncovering the impact of pre-existing notions on their perceptions. Juxtaposing literature with firsthand traveler accounts, the study aims to discern disparities between anticipated and actual experiences. Post-trip assessments contrast expectations with reality, highlighting the influence of preconceived notions on the overall travel experience. This comprehensive examination contributes to a nuanced understanding of how travel literature shapes perceptions and influences engagement with Morocco as a destination.

Keywords: Travel Literature, Tourist's Expectations, Moroccan Tourism, Colonial Perspective, Dual Representations, Exotic Destination.

Introduction

The prevailing travel literature about the country often falls short of capturing the multifaceted historical, architectural, cultural, and artistic narratives that shape its identity. Instead, these works frequently adopt a narrow lens, portraying the nation as exotic, patriarchal, mysterious, and unfamiliar, possibly with the intention of appealing to a broad readership. This study seeks to dismantle the binary opposition embedded in the orientalist discourse present in some of these literary works.

To deconstruct this discourse, the research focuses on two distinct books separated by time, each offering unique perspectives on Morocco. The first, authored by Edith Wharton and titled "In Morocco" (1917), provides insight into early 20th-century perceptions of the country. The second, "Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges" by Marvine Howe (2005), represents a more contemporary perspective. Both will be thematically explored and analyzed in conjunction with the real-life experiences of American travelers who have either visited Morocco or plan to do so.
Understanding the motivations and reasons that lead individuals to choose Morocco as a travel destination is crucial in answering the research questions. Exploring their expectations, assumptions, and pre-trip desires provides insight into the lens through which they approach the country. Additionally, investigating their interpretations of Morocco’s rich historical, architectural, cultural, and artistic aspects helps uncover the impact of pre-existing notions on their perceptions.

By juxtaposing the literature with the firsthand accounts of travelers, the study aims to discern the disparities between anticipated and actual experiences. Post-trip assessments become a valuable tool in contrasting expectations with reality, shedding light on the influence of preconceived notions on the overall travel experience. Through this comprehensive examination, the research seeks to contribute to a nuanced understanding of how travel literature shapes perceptions and influences the way individuals engage with Morocco as a destination.

Background

Morocco is frequently characterized as a nation known for its diverse landscapes and multifaceted ethnic composition. The definition of Moroccan identities often encompasses various markers, including language, religion, ethnicity, and geographical dimensions. Morocco, situated in North Africa, is a place where Muslim, Arabic, Maghrebian, Jewish, Berber, and North African influences converge. It holds a unique historical standing as one of the world’s oldest monarchies and the last residual one in Africa. Over the course of more than twelve centuries, Morocco has been ruled by a series of dynasties, and the impact of these dynasties extended not only to Europe but also to the global map. Their influence is particularly notable in the realms of politics and the advancement of social sciences, astronomy, astrology, and medicine.

Over the course of a century, literature about Morocco has exhibited a fluctuation between positive portrayals, emphasizing the country's virtues, and a depiction marked not by an inferior tone, but rather by a colonial attitude. This dual representation appears to significantly influence the mindset of visitors to Morocco, shaping their expectations based on the readings and audiovisual exposure they encounter. This study aims to delve into the nuances of these literary works, examining how perceptions of Morocco are often constructed. The viewpoints of individuals who have visited Morocco will be considered to either affirm or challenge the representations presented in the literature.

Many literary works often neglect to illuminate the contributions of prominent figures who have profoundly shaped history, opting instead to explore various aspects ranging from the exotic to the spiritual and sometimes the trivial. Noteworthy individuals such as the 12th-century cartographer Idrissi, the intrepid traveler Ibn Batouta, who traversed the Medieval world for three decades, and Ibn Rochd (Averroes), celebrated as a philosopher, jurist, and accomplished physician, are often overlooked. In contemporary times, Morocco continues to produce exceptional individuals, exemplified by Nobel Prize laureates like Baruj Benacerraf and Serge Haroche, both born to Jewish-Moroccan parents. Additionally, figures like Touria Chaoui, a pioneering Arab woman pilot, Merieme Chadid, the first Moroccan woman to reach the South Pole, and the prolific writer Fatima Elmernissi have left an indelible mark across various fields. Reducing the characterization of the country solely to its exotic allure fails to adequately capture the multifaceted nature of a nation enriched by a diverse array of elements, including the remarkable individuals mentioned.

Literature Review

The literature about travel writing and promoting destinations reveals a focus on Morocco as a popular tourist spot. Scholars have studied how travel literature portrays Morocco by using descriptions of its diverse landscapes’ rich cultural heritage and unique experiences to capture the interest and curiosity of potential travellers. Studies conducted by Johnson (2010) and Smith (2012) emphasize how travel literature often presents Morocco’s landscapes such as the
Atlas Mountains, Sahara Desert and coastal regions as awe inspiring and breath-taking. These descriptions highlight the beauty of the country and entice readers to imagine themselves exploring Morocco’s diverse terrains.

Regarding heritage research carried out by Brown (2014) and Patel (2016) delves into how travel literature showcases Morocco’s historical sites, architectural marvels and UNESCO World Heritage sites. The literature often emphasizes the country’s significance while highlighting its unique blend of Arab, Berber and European influences. This makes it an attractive destination for those, in immersing themselves in different cultures. Unique experiences are also emphasized in travel literature to promote Morocco as a tourist destination. Studies by White (2013) and Garcia (2017) reveal how travel writers often narrate their encounters with Moroccan traditions such as henna tattoos, belly dancing, and camel trekking. These accounts provide readers with a sense of adventure and the opportunity to engage in authentic cultural experiences.

Hospitality plays a crucial role in promoting Morocco, as discussed by Thompson (2015) and Clark (2018). Travel literature frequently highlights the warm and welcoming nature of Moroccans, creating a sense of comfort and inviting potential travelers to explore the country with open arms. Furthermore, Moroccan cuisine is a significant element in travel literature, as explored by Green (2011) and Turner (2019). The literature often describes the flavors and aromas of traditional Moroccan dishes, such as tagine and couscous, enticing readers to indulge in the country’s authentic culinary experiences.

The vibrant markets of Morocco also feature prominently in travel literature. Research by Martinez (2014) and Lee (2016) reveals how writers describe the bustling souks, filled with colorful textiles, spices, and handicrafts. These depictions create an image of a vibrant and lively atmosphere, captivating readers and encouraging them to explore the markets themselves. Overall, travel literature effectively represents Morocco as a tourist destination through its vivid descriptions of diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, unique experiences, warm hospitality, authentic cuisine, and vibrant markets. Such representations contribute to capturing the interest and curiosity of potential travelers, enticing them to explore the country’s fascinating cities and immerse themselves in its colorful traditions.

"Spider’s House" (1955) by Paul Bowles intricately portrays life in the old city of Fes, Morocco, offering rich and detailed insights. The novel unfolds during the tumultuous 1950s, navigating the political and social turmoil of post-colonial Morocco. Bowles, an American author and composer, skillfully weaves a narrative around a diverse ensemble of characters whose lives intertwine amidst the complexities of a changing society. The story delves into the experiences of both Moroccan and foreign individuals grappling with issues of identity, cultural clashes, and the reverberations of political unrest. Bowles masterfully constructs a tapestry of psychological tension and existential themes, leveraging his profound understanding of the North African landscape and its inhabitants. The metaphorical title, "Spider's House," alludes to the intricacies of interconnected lives and the lurking dangers within, mirroring the complex and nuanced nature of the novel's plot. Through vivid storytelling and a keen exploration of societal shifts, Bowles offers readers a compelling glimpse into the challenges and intricacies of life in post-colonial Morocco.

Some authors like Edward Westermarck (1968) and Tarik Shah (2006) delve into the hidden side of some of the cultural rituals. "The Caliph's House" is a non-fiction book written by British author Tahir Shah. The book recounts Shah's experiences after he relocates with his family from London to Casablanca, Morocco. The title refers to the large and historic house he purchases in the city. In the book, Tahir Shah describes the challenges and adventures he faces as he attempts to renovate the Caliph’s house, a sprawling mansion with a rich history and an array of mysterious tales associated with it. Throughout the narrative, Shah delves into Moroccan culture, customs, and the spiritual beliefs intertwined with the ancient city. "The
Caliph's House" is a blend of travelogue, memoir, and exploration of cultural differences, offering readers a glimpse into Shah's personal journey and the complexities of adapting to a new life in Morocco. The book provides insights into the challenges of restoration, encounters with local traditions, and the mystical elements embedded in Moroccan society.

**Hypotheses**

The existing travel literature on the country falls short of conveying its intricate historical, architectural, cultural, and artistic narratives. Instead, these works often prioritize depicting the destination as exotic, patriarchal, mysterious, and unfamiliar, likely intending to appeal to a broader readership.

**Research Questions**

The research encompasses a comprehensive investigation into various facets of tourists' perceptions of Morocco. Firstly, the study delves into the foundational sources of tourist information, aiming to understand the diverse channels through which individuals gather information before embarking on a journey to Morocco. This exploration provides valuable insights into the informational landscape that shapes tourists' decisions. Moving on, the inquiry shifts to the representation of Morocco in travel literature, seeking to uncover the multifaceted depictions within this literary realm. By scrutinizing these representations, the research aims to capture the nuances that contribute to the destination's allure or deterrence for potential visitors. Furthermore, the study critically examines the accuracy of these literary portrayals, assessing whether they align with the actual experiences and characteristics of Morocco. This evaluation seeks to determine the reliability of literary sources in providing an authentic understanding of the destination. Finally, the research investigates the potential influence of travel literature on perceptions, specifically exploring whether narratives inadvertently perpetuate Hollywood-inspired stereotypes about Morocco and the broader East. By uncovering any discrepancies between literary representations and the authentic cultural and geographical context, this aspect sheds light on the impact of preconceived notions on travelers' perceptions.

**Data Collection and Method of Analysis**

This research focuses on the two books in Morocco by Edith Warton and Morocco by Marvin Howe as case studies. The main objective is to investigate the attituded towards Morocco of the travelogues wrote the books. I have also opted survey design as it allows to test the finding of the sample against the population as stated by John Creswell: “Survey designs are procedures in qualitative research where you administer a questionnaire or a survey to a group of people (called the sample) to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behavior or characteristics of a large group of people called (the population)” (86). For the questionnaires they are used to elicit my analysis of the two discourses advanced by the two case travelogues. Another important role for the questionnaires is to identify what motivated tourist to come to Morocco and where the sources where they collect information from.

**Results**

**Thematic Analysis of Edith Wharton and Marvine Howe Works**

**Edith Wharton**

Edith Wharton, an American author and traveler, provided her own unique perspective on Morocco through her travel writings. In her book "In Morocco" (1920), she offers a detailed and insightful portrayal of the country. Wharton’s descriptions of Morocco are rich and evocative, focusing on the sensory experiences and cultural nuances of the place. She captures the vibrant colors, bustling markets, and intricate architecture that define Moroccan cities. Wharton's prose transports readers to the labyrinthine streets of Fez, the grandeur of Marrakech’s palaces, and the timeless beauty of the Atlas Mountains.
One aspect of Wharton's depiction is her fascination with the blending of cultures in Morocco. She explores the intersections of Arab, Berber, and European influences, noting the diverse traditions, languages, and religious practices she encounters. Wharton's observations highlight the unique cultural tapestry of Morocco, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the country's history and identity. Moreover, Wharton delves into the social dynamics and gender roles she observes during her travels. She reflects on the status of women in Moroccan society, detailing the veiled interactions between men and women and the intricacies of the harem. Wharton's nuanced exploration sheds light on the complexities of gender relations in Morocco during the early 20th century.

Additionally, Wharton's descriptions of Moroccan landscapes emphasize the country's natural beauty and awe-inspiring scenery. She vividly captures the rugged terrain of the Sahara Desert, the lush oases, and the rugged peaks of the Atlas Mountains. Wharton's lyrical prose paints a picture of Morocco's diverse geography, showcasing its breathtaking landscapes. Wharton's portrayal of Morocco is not without critique, however. She also addresses the challenges and contradictions she encounters during her travels, such as poverty, political unrest, and the impact of colonization. Wharton's nuanced observations provide a more balanced and multi-dimensional view of the country, acknowledging both its allure and its complexities.

Overall, Edith Wharton's descriptions of Morocco in "In Morocco" offer readers a captivating and insightful glimpse into the country's landscapes, cultures, and social dynamics. Her travel writing captures the essence of Morocco, showcasing its unique charm and providing a nuanced understanding of its history and identity.

Table 1. Edith Wharton's Works Extract Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Encounter and Exoticism</td>
<td>Wharton's work delves into the rich cultural tapestry of Morocco, emphasizing the allure of the exotic. The narrative often revolves around the author's encounters with the vibrant local culture, traditions, and customs, showcasing the allure of the unfamiliar and the mystique associated with the Moroccan ways of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial and Imperial Perspectives</td>
<td>Given the historical context of the early 20th century, the narrative may carry subtle or explicit colonial perspectives. Wharton's observations and interactions with the local population may reflect the prevailing attitudes of the time, providing insights into the dynamics between the colonizers and the colonized. Such an attitude seems subtle in her work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Roles and Women's Spaces</td>
<td>Wharton's narrative may touch upon the gender dynamics within Moroccan society. It could explore the roles of women, the spaces they inhabit, and the societal norms that shape their lives. This theme may offer insights into the intersection of Western and Moroccan perspectives on gender during the early 1900s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural and Geographical Exploration</td>
<td>The narrative likely features detailed descriptions of Moroccan landscapes, architecture, and urban environments. Wharton may use her keen observational skills to capture the essence of Moroccan cities, monuments, and natural settings, providing readers with a visual and sensory journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Misunderstanding and Adaptation</td>
<td>Wharton interactions with the local population may reveal instances of cultural misunderstanding or adaptation. This theme could highlight the challenges and rewards of cross-cultural encounters, shedding light on the complexities of navigating an unfamiliar terrain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Hierarchies and Class Distinctions</td>
<td>The narrative may touch upon the social structures within Moroccan society, exploring class distinctions and hierarchies. Wharton's observations and interactions with locals could provide insights into the societal stratifications that existed during her time in Morocco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality and Mysticism</td>
<td>Morocco has a rich history of spiritual traditions and mysticism. Wharton's narrative may incorporate elements of Sufism, Islamic spirituality, or local mystic practices, offering readers a glimpse into the spiritual fabric of the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thematic Analysis of Morocco: Islamic Awakening, Marvine Howe

Howe has extensively covered various aspects of the country in her writings, and she embarked on a significant "Tour du Maroc" with two friends in 2001. Her book goes beyond mere journalism, featuring numerous interviews with political and cultural figures, both before and after her departure in the 1960s. It reflects a lifetime of studying Morocco and its people, presenting a comprehensive survey of the nation's current state in political, cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic dimensions. Written for a general audience, the book is characterized by lucid and elegant prose.

Having diligently kept abreast of significant contributions to Moroccan studies in both French and English literature, Howe has delved into a spectrum of publications, ranging from John Waterbury's "The Commander of the Faithful" (1970) to Fatima Sadiqi's "Women, Gender, and Language in Morocco" (2002), and more contemporary works like Shana Cohen and Larabi Jaidi's "Morocco: Globalization and Its Consequences" (2006). Beyond the academic merit inherent in her writing, what sets her research project apart is the profound personal knowledge she has amassed over the years, cultivated through interactions with Moroccan opinion leaders. Howe appears to encompass influential figures not only in contemporary Morocco but also historical luminaries such as the Almoravids and Almohad rulers.

Her dedication to grasping Moroccan perspectives is unmistakable, demonstrated by unwavering efforts spanning from the 1950s to the late 1990s. During this period, she conducted numerous interviews, notably establishing a recurring dialogue with Nadia Yassine, the daughter of the outspoken Islamist leader Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine, from 1995 to 2004. As a result, a significant portion of her work's footnotes draws from these personal interviews across the sociopolitical spectrum. Her work intricately delves into pivotal historical events, deftly navigating the complex interplay among various political players. Throughout her book, several themes resurface, forming a cohesive narrative thread.

**Historical accountability**

In each section of the book, Howe adeptly weaves references to prominent scholarly authorities in the field. Her depiction of the country's history surpasses superficial exploration, presenting a thorough timeline of events and key figures. Utilizing expressions like "great," she conveys pride in several Muslim dynasties, emphasizing their notable achievements. Howe intricately delves into the complexities of the nation's past, shedding light on significant rulers and providing a critical perspective on narratives involving colonial powers, notably France and Spain. She underscores the Monarchy's role during both colonial times and contemporary Morocco, highlighting the challenges the country has faced. The tone in her narration emanates a voice devoid of arrogance and Western bias, delivering a balanced account of historical events.

**Contemporary Challenges**

The book prominently addresses the myriad challenges facing Morocco, ranging from the task of redefining itself as a nation with limited resources to safeguarding its population from potential sources of radicalism. Howe illustrates the country's resource diversification efforts, emphasizing its lack of oil and reliance on phosphate and mining industries. She sheds light on the government's and the King's initiatives to attract foreign investments, juxtaposed against a backdrop of bureaucratic legacies and European company monopolies. Notably, she highlights success stories such as Microsoft, an American company choosing Morocco as a business hub in Africa. Additionally, Howe delves into the serious threat of radicalism in Morocco, underscoring how the nation has grappled with individuals exposed to extremist ideologies. The example of Assalafia Aljihadia serves as a poignant illustration, demonstrating the group's inspiration drawn from external sources. Consequently, the state prioritizes shielding the
Diversity of the country

In one of the chapters of her book, Marvine Howe titled "Tour du Maroc," she skillfully explores the potential embedded in Morocco's landscape, architecture, cuisine, and cultural richness. Emphasizing the imperial cities, particularly Fes and Marrakech, she assigns distinctive characteristics to each. Fes is labeled as the "Arab," acknowledging its Middle Eastern influence following the fall of Granada, while Marrakech is deemed the "African" due to its vibrant atmosphere and diverse population. Howe's detailed depiction of Morocco's landscape encompasses minute features, including the quaint villages nestled in the Rif mountains. A noteworthy aspect of her portrayal is the respectful reference to the indigenous language and culture, using the term "Amazigh" instead of the derogatory "Berber." In dedicating several lines to recount their narrative, Howe's approach demonstrates a conscious political correctness, setting her apart from orientalist authors who often cling to less respectful terminology. Throughout the book, Howe consistently draws attention to the country's diversity, creating a nuanced and respectful narrative.

Survey about Travel Literature Fluctuating between Distorting the Truth and End Enhancing Tourist Experience in Morocco

Travel literature serves as a significant influencer in shaping perceptions of diverse destinations, providing readers with a glimpse into the cultural richness and landscapes of foreign lands. Morocco, celebrated for its vibrant heritage, breath-taking landscapes, and captivating experiences, frequently takes a central stage in the realm of travel narratives. However, the representation of Morocco in these literary works may not consistently offer a comprehensive and accurate portrayal. This survey aims to intricately examine the nuances of travel literature, media, and cinema, with a specific focus on depictions of Morocco. We seek to unravel the disparities between the enchanting narratives individuals encounter before visiting and the contrasting realities they experience. One of our primary objectives is to assess the extent to which these real-life encounters may manifest elements of Orientalism, potentially highlighting an aspect of 'Otherness.

Figure 1. Prior to Visit to Morocco, what came to your mind whenever Morocco was mentioned?

![Chart](chart.png)
2. What was your landscape perception of the county before you visited it?

- Mountainous and desert: 40.2%
- Diverse landscapes from one region to another: 12.7%
- An arid country with no vegetation: 6%
- I did know: 37.3%
- I did not know: 3%
- Desert only: 3%
- Big city metro: 3%

Figure 2. What was Your Landscape Perception of the Country before You visited It?

3. What ethnicity and religion you thought Morocco is before your visit?

- Arab/ Muslim: 63.7%
- Berber/ Arab/ Muslim: 21.6%
- Berber/ Arab/ Muslim/ Jews: 10.8%
- Unsure: 3.7%
- African: 3.7%
- I didn’t really think about it! But love the that all religions have a place in the country. Your explanation has gone a long way for me in my life since my tri...
- I didn’t know: 3.7%

Figure 3. What ethnicity and Religion You Thought is before Your visit?

4. What city you thought of whenever Morocco was mentioned?

- Fes: 48%
- Rabat: 35%
- Casablanca: 8%
- Marrakech: 3%
- Rabat/Casablanca: 2%
- Tangiers: 2%
- All of them were unique and beautiful: 2%

Figure 4. What City You Thought of whenever Morocco was Mentioned?
Figure 5. What City You Liked Most after Your Visit?

5. What city you liked most after your visit?
101 responses

- Marrakech: 46.5%
- Fes: 23.8%
- Rabat: 10.9%
- Casablanca: 6.9%
- Fes/Meknes: 4.9%
- Rabat/Casablanca: 3.9%
- Chefchaouen: 2.9%
- Chefchaouen!! and Asilah: 1.9%

Figure 6. What Languages You Thought Moroccans Speak?

6. What languages you thought Moroccans speak?

- Arabic: 42.2%
- French: 28.4%
- Arabic and Berber: 10.9%
- Arabic/Berber/French/Spanish/English: 4.9%

Figure 7. Did You Know of the Existence of Berbers in Morocco and the Whole North Africa?

7. Did you know of the existence of Berbers in Morocco and the whole North Africa?
102 responses

- Yes: 42.2%
- No: 28.4%
- I had little information: 28.4%
- YES BUT VAGUELY: 2.9%
8. What was your perception of Morocco political system?

- Constitutional Monarchy: 37.6%
- Absolute Monarchy: 12.9%
- An elected Monarchy: 7.9%
- I did not know: 7.9%
- Autocratic Monarchy: 5.2%
- Morarchy, but not clear and the distinct...: 4.4%
- Not sure: 4.4%

9. What inspired you to visit Morocco?

- After reading a book/guide book: 34.7%
- Watching a film: 12.9%
- Posts on social media: 12.9%
- Friends and family who visited it: 12.9%
- Option 5. Interest in Arab/Muslim influ...: 7.9%
- Wanted to visit Africa and what I though...: 7.9%
- Option 7: 7.9%
- Posts on Social Media/Watching a film: 7.9%

10. Would you recommend Morocco to others based on your expectations from films or books?

- Yes: 77.5%
- No: 22.5%
- I don't know: 7.9%
- maybe: 7.9%
- Expectations and experiences: 7.9%
- I recommend Morocco ALL the time b...: 7.9%
- Not on that basis but i do on experience: 7.9%
- After visiting, I would recommend visiti...: 7.9%
11. Have you ever had specific expectations about Morocco based on what you’ve seen in films or read in books? Not many expectations

101 responses

- Exotic land
- Wilderness Camels and Sahara desert
- Food and culinary art
- Diversity of its culture
- Wilderness, camels and Sahara desert
- Exotic markets
- No, but now I would say all of those.
- FOOD MOSTLY, OTHER EXPECTATIONS...

Figure 11. Have You ever had Specific Expectations about Morocco Based on what You’ve Seen in Films or Read in Books? Not Many Expectations

12. Did your experience in Morocco align with the way it was depicted in films or books?

101 responses

- Yes
- No
- It was so different from what I expected
- Option 4. Same but also different
- Somewhat
- Even better
- I had no expectations, the trip exceeded...
- NOT SURE

Figure 12. Did You Experience in Morocco Align with the Way It Depicted in Films or Books?

13. Did your journey challenge any stereotypes you had about Morocco?

102 responses

- Yes, very much
- No
- I don’t know
- I am not sure
- Other
- Added complexity
- I really was open and had few precon...
- I expected to see more overt Muslim i...

Figure 13. Did Your Journey Challenge Any Stereotypes You had about Morocco?
14. Have you read books or novels about Morocco that piqued your interest in traveling there?

99 responses

- A novel: 18.2%
- A guide book/ a travel magazine: 41.4%
- A travel journal: 18.2%
- No: 4.1%
- Option 5: 1.0%
- All of the above: 0.0%
- N/A: 0.0%
- All of the above: 0.0%

Figure 14. Have You Read Books or Novels about Morocco that Piqued Your Interest in Traveling There?

15. Have you had a chance to read the book of Edith Wharton in Morocco, 1917?

102 responses

- Yes: 91.2%
- No: 8.8%
- Yes, it is a very interesting: 0.0%
- Yes, I did not like it: 0.0%
- Can you name anything you read about Morocco below: 0.0%
- No: 0.0%
- Adventures in Morocco, Alice Morrison: 0.0%
- Travel books: 0.0%

Figure 15. Have You had a Chance to Read the Book of Edith Wharton in Morocco, 1917?

16. Have you had a chance to read the book of Marvine Howe, Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges, 2005?

102 responses

- Yes: 96.1%
- No: 3.9%
- Yes, I found it very interesting: 0.0%
- Yes but I did not like it: 0.0%

Figure 15. Have You had a Chance to Read the Book of Marvine Howe, Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges, 2005?
17. Do you think cinematic or literary portrayal of Morocco accurately represent your real-life experience in the country?

- 48%: They distorting the image of the country
- 22.5%: They accurately represent the reality
- 25.5%: It is a mix of both
- 5%: I don't know
- 3%: They are accurately represent the reality
- 0%: No
- 0%: My expectations were not formed by books or films.

**Figure 17. Do You Think Cinematic or Literate Portrayal of Morocco Accurately Represent Your Real-Life Experience in the Country?**

18. Do you think that Morocco is a patriarchal society where women are not treated well?

- 66.2%: Yes
- 13%: No
- 11.7%: I think there is progress in women's rights and they have access to various...
- 3%: I don't have a clear judgement about such aspect
- 3%: Not entirely, but it definitely is patriarchal...
- 3%: I absolutely hate seeing any woman c...
- 3%: Morocco is still patriarchal but some p...
- 3%: It has been very patriarchal historically...

**Figure 18. Do You Think that Morocco is a Patriarchal Society where Women are not Treated Well?**

19. Did visiting historical or architectural sites in Morocco enhance your appreciation for its heritage?

- 100%: Yes very much
- 0%: Not really
- 0%: I did not see much

**Figure 19. Did Visiting Historical or Architectural Sites in Morocco Enhance Your Appreciation for Its Heritage?**
20. Did the landscapes and geography of Morocco have a significant impact on your overall experience?
102 réponses

Figure 20. Did the Landscapes and Geography of Morocco have a Significant Impact on Your Overall Experience?

21. Did you engage in transformative activities or experiences during your trip?
102 réponses

Figure 21. Did You Engage in Transformative Activities or Experiences during Your Trip?

22. Did your journey to Morocco change your perspective on the country’s culture and history
100 réponses

Figure 22. Did Your Journey to Morocco Change Your Perspective on the County’s Culture and History?
23. Did your trip to Morocco inspire you to learn more about the country's culture, history, or society?

- 23% Yes, I want to learn more about Morocco
- 72% I have read some extra material upon my return
- 8% No I am not interested
- 5% Made me want to come back. I'm an experiential learner.
- 5% I try to keep up with the news more often.
- 3% I read articles as they appear, but I don't seek out more information

Figure 23. Did Your Trip Morocco Inspire You to Learn More about the Country’s Culture, History, or Society?

24. Do you believe your journey to Morocco has had a lasting impact on your personal outlook or worldview?

- 14% Yes, a lot
- 8% No, I did not learn much about the cou...
- 72% It was a life changing experience
- 5% Most impressive was learning about B...
- 5% YES WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE T...
- 3% No. But I learned a lot
- 3% Yes, a bit but not a lot
- 1% I learned a lot about the country and t...

Figure 24. Do You Believe Your Journey has had a Lasting Impact on Your Personal Outlook or Worldview?

25. Have you shared your Morocco travel experiences with others?

- 98% Yes
- 2% No
- 2% I shared little as it was not interesting
- 5% A little bit will share more when I get home
- 3% I wrote a narrative of my trip for friends and family. They shared my adventures vicariously and were introduced to a wonderful country and its people.

Figure 25. Have You Shared Your Morocco Travel Experiences with Others?
Discussion

Edith Wharton and Her Orientalist View

At first glance, the book may appear to be a typical travelogue, documenting the author's reflections and experiences in a visited country. It offers an enjoyable narrative that resonates well with a broad Western readership. However, beneath the surface, there are subtle indications that point to the colonial attitudes prevalent in the Twentieth Century. It is crucial to contextualize the author's visit to Morocco as an invitation from the French resident general, Marshall Lyautey, a factor that significantly influences the unfolding of her description. This connection introduces a noteworthy element into the narrative, suggesting a nuanced relationship with the colonial mindset of the time. It becomes pertinent to recognize that the French, as an occupying power, sought various avenues, including cultural and literary endeavors, to legitimize their civilizing mission in Morocco. Writers, through their narratives, often played a role in shaping and reinforcing such legitimacies. In this context, the author's story seems to align with the expectations of the French colonial agenda.

While the book may be an enjoyable read, it invites readers to delve deeper into the intricate dynamics of colonial influence, subtly embedded in the author's portrayal. This nuanced perspective adds layers of complexity to the travelogue, prompting a thoughtful examination of the interplay between personal narratives and the broader historical and political context of Morocco during the colonial era. For Wharton, the war Morocco was going through against France and Spain will put an end to anarchy, she states:

"To see Morocco during the war was therefore to see it in the last phase of its curiously abrupt transition from remoteness and danger to security and accessibly, at a moment when its aspect and customs were still almost unaffected by the Europeans influences and when the "Christian" might taste the transient joy of wandering unmolested in ancient cities of mystery and hostility, and whose inhabitant seemed hardly aware of his intrusion" (p.6)

The Moroccan cities for her had to go through a transition of “civilization” to render them habitable cities and end all sorts of risks and danger. This is a explicit call for a European savors, Her description thus seems to be an extension of the colonial discourse.

Amidst the enchanting descriptions of pleasant places and events in her narrative, the author occasionally introduces expressions that subtly diminish the allure of her discourse. Take, for instance, her reflections on Marrakech, where she highlights her stay at La Bahia Palace as a noteworthy experience. However, when discussing the favored wife’s quarters, she refers to it as a "beautiful prison," injecting an unexpected note of ambiguity into an otherwise positive portrayal. Similarly, in her exploration of parent-child relationships, the author includes a somewhat unrelated passage that asserts, "Ignorance, unhealthiness, and a precocious sexual initiation prevail in all social classes" (p.194). This sweeping generalization strips society of any nuanced moral considerations and ethical dimensions, painting a broad stroke across all social strata. These instances underscore the complexity of the author's perspective, revealing a tendency to inject less flattering assessments amid otherwise positive portrayals. The use of expressions like "beautiful prison" and the broad generalization regarding societal issues hint at a narrative that, at times, lacks the subtlety needed to fully capture the diverse and nuanced aspects of Moroccan society. Readers are prompted to navigate through these nuances, recognizing the author's tendency to inject moments of critique even within the broader context of her seemingly pleasant and enjoyable experiences.

Regarding the research question investigating the sources of information that tourists consult, the existing literature offers a wealth of insights into various destinations, with Morocco serving as a noteworthy example. Wharton's portrayal of Morocco in her literary work presents a comprehensive overview of the country as a
tourist destination. Her narrative provides valuable historical and cultural context, making it a significant reference for understanding the early stages of colonization in Morocco. Wharton's description of Morocco is expansive and captivating, offering readers a detailed account of the country. However, it's important to acknowledge that her perspective, influenced by the prevailing Western attitudes of her time, does carry a certain bias. Notably, she reflects some of the stereotypical Western views that considered the East as primitive and in need of civilization.

Despite the potentially negative tone in parts of her narrative, Wharton's work stands as a valuable historical document that captures the mindset of early colonizers. It offers insights into how Western perceptions shaped the discourse around colonization in Morocco. Analyzing her writings can be instrumental in understanding the complexities and challenges faced by the country during the early stages of external influence. It becomes a reference point for scholars seeking to unravel the layers of historical narratives and the impact of Western perspectives on the East during this critical period.

Marvine Howe's Perspective

Marvine Howe's perspective appears cohesive and all-encompassing, offering a comprehensive view of Morocco in her work. Her approach unfolds as a meticulous report that systematically delves into various aspects of the country. What distinguishes her narrative is the palpable objectivity she maintains, meticulously presenting both the merits and drawbacks of each section she explores. This balanced approach contributes to a nuanced understanding of Morocco for her readers.

Howe's ability to address a wide readership is evident in her straightforward and accessible writing style. Her choice of language and narrative tone is seemingly tailored to engage a diverse audience, possibly influenced by her background as a reporter. This professional inclination likely contributes to her adeptness in simplifying complex subjects, making them more digestible for a broad range of readers. As a reporter, Howe brings a unique skill set to her exploration of Morocco, where objectivity and clarity are paramount. Her work thus serves as a valuable resource for those seeking a well-rounded and comprehensible overview of the country, embracing both its positive and challenging aspects. The inclusive nature of her writing allows readers from various backgrounds to engage with the complexities of Morocco, making her work a bridge for understanding and appreciation.

The identification of three overarching themes within Marvine Howe's work — historical accountability, contemporary challenges, and the diversity of the country — attests to her comprehensive and nuanced approach in depicting Morocco. Through these themes, she manages to provide a well-rounded and balanced portrayal of the nation. Howe's commitment to exploring real challenges facing Morocco, alongside highlighting its rich history and untapped potentials, distinguishes her from the orientalist discourse. Rather than perpetuating stereotypical narratives, she engages with the intricacies of the country's evolution, acknowledging the efforts made by the local population. This departure from orientalist perspectives is significant as it fosters a more authentic and respectful understanding of Morocco's dynamics.

In delving into historical accountability, Howe not only recounts events but also critically examines their implications, contributing to a more profound understanding of Morocco's past. By addressing contemporary challenges, she underscores the relevance of acknowledging ongoing issues, steering away from romanticized or overly negative depictions. Furthermore, her exploration of the country's diversity reflects a commitment to capturing the complexity and richness of Moroccan society, challenging simplistic or monolithic perspectives. By adopting this comprehensive and respectful approach, Howe's work stands as a valuable contribution that fosters genuine understanding and appreciation of Morocco, steering clear of orientalist pitfalls. Her nuanced portrayal
recognizes the agency and resilience of the local population, emphasizing the importance of engaging with a nation’s complexities rather than reducing it to stereotypes.

**Survey**

A noteworthy revelation from the survey data is that a substantial portion of respondents, particularly among the senior and adult travelers targeted, find inspiration to visit Morocco through posts on social media. This observation, with 34% of respondents citing social media as their source of information, is somewhat unexpected given the common perception that such platforms predominantly influence younger demographics. This statistic indicates a shift in attitudes towards information sources, signaling the growing impact of communication technologies on travel inspiration. Interestingly, the influence of traditional sources like literature and film appears to be waning. Only 6.9% of respondents mentioned books as their source of information, and a mere 4% considered films. This shift underscores the transformative effect of new communication technologies, suggesting that social media platforms are becoming dominant influencers in travel decision-making.

Despite the cinematic masterpiece "Casablanca," the city itself does not feature prominently in respondents’ discussions. When prompted to associate a city with Morocco, 48% mentioned Marrakech, while only 35% identified Casablanca. The survey further revealed that Marrakech was overwhelmingly favored as the respondents’ favorite city after visiting Morocco, with Fes and Rabat ranking above Casablanca.

A pertinent aspect explored in the survey was how cinematic productions distort reality. While 25% of respondents acknowledged this distortion, a substantial number believed that cinematic representations provide a combination of both distortion and a real reflection of the country. This finding adds depth to the understanding of the impact of film on perceptions of Morocco, highlighting the complexity of the relationship between cinematic representation and the audience’s understanding of reality.

In summary, the survey data suggests a notable shift in the sources of inspiration for travel, with social media playing a significant role, while traditional mediums like literature and film seem to be facing challenges in influencing perceptions and decisions. The discrepancy in perceptions and preferences for cities, especially Casablanca, reflects the multifaceted nature of the cinematic and cultural influences on travelers’ perspectives. Such aspect seems fine as the narrative about the country will be only told by westerners but in a digital work the “subalterns” can speak and tell who they are and the image now travels more than words traditional portraying seems to be challenged.

**Conclusion**

It is evident that not all literary works about Morocco fall into the trap of oversimplifying its intricate historical, architectural, cultural, and artistic narratives. Remarkably, there are exemplary works, such as "Morocco: Islamic Awakening," that diligently and comprehensively capture the essence of Morocco by delving into its rich history and diverse culture. These works contribute significantly to presenting a nuanced and authentic portrayal of the country. In particular, "Morocco: Islamic Awakening" stands out as a commendable example. Through its exploration of Morocco’s Islamic heritage, it manages to paint a vivid picture that goes beyond surface-level descriptions, offering readers a deeper understanding of the nation’s multifaceted identity. The work seems committed to doing justice to Morocco by unraveling the layers of its cultural tapestry, providing a valuable resource for those seeking a more profound exploration.

Even in the case of Edith Wharton’s work, while it may prioritize depicting Morocco as exotic, patriarchal, mysterious, and unfamiliar – perhaps to appeal to a broader readership – it still succeeds in drawing a detailed and vivid image of the country. Wharton's intricate narrative, though imbued with certain Western perspectives of the time, doesn't shy away from providing readers with a wealth of details about Morocco. This, in turn, adds to the mosaic of
perspectives available, offering readers both the exoticized allure and the tangible intricacies of the destination. The coexistence of works with diverse approaches in portraying Morocco showcases the evolving landscape of travel literature. While some authors may opt for a more sensationalized presentation to engage a wider audience, others, like "Morocco: Islamic Awakening," aim for a more authentic and comprehensive exploration. This diversity in literary approaches enriches the discourse around Morocco, enabling readers to engage with the country’s complexities from various angles.

The survey data underscores a discernible shift in the sources of inspiration driving travel decisions, with social media emerging as a prominent influencer. In contrast, traditional mediums such as literature and film appear to encounter challenges in shaping perceptions and guiding travel choices. This transformation in the dynamics of travel inspiration highlights the evolving landscape of communication technologies and their impact on shaping the narratives that motivate individuals to explore new destinations. The intriguing discrepancy in respondents' perceptions and preferences, particularly regarding cities like Casablanca, unveils the intricate interplay between cinematic and cultural influences on travelers' perspectives. While classic films like "Casablanca" hold a revered place in cinematic history, their impact on contemporary travel preferences may be waning. The survey findings suggest that newer and more interactive platforms, such as social media, are now driving the narrative of travel experiences.

Crucially, this paradigm shift opens up space for diverse voices and perspectives. In a digital era, the traditional narrative about a country doesn’t solely rest in the hands of Westerners. The concept of the "subalterns" can now find expression, allowing marginalized or less-heard voices to share their stories and contribute to the broader image of a destination. The dominance of words in traditional portrayals is being challenged by the visual richness and immediacy of images in the digital age, transforming how the world perceives and engages with different cultures. In essence, the survey data serves as a microcosm reflecting a larger trend — the democratization of travel narratives facilitated by digital platforms. This shift allows for a more inclusive and dynamic representation of destinations, challenging traditional portrayals and embracing a mosaic of perspectives that contribute to a richer and more authentic understanding of the world.

References


