

## **TOURISM AND MUSEUMS: AWARENESS OF HERITAGE ENHANCEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

The main goal of this study is to understand the degree of knowledge of existing museums in a city in Central Portugal by students of the professional higher technical course in tourism (level V course). This work was based on collecting information about the habits of visiting museums among students of a level V course, a questionnaire was prepared for this purpose and the methodology of quantitative analysis was applied. The results refer to three main reflections: 1) a significant number of students have never visited any of the existing museums in the city, despite being their academic residence city; 2) If you visited a museum in the city, you learned about its existence because you passed by the museum or because friends recommended you to visit; 3) the main reasons for visiting museums are the desire to get to know them, walk around and study visits. The main limitation of this study is the comparative analysis between other courses at the same level of education. The result of this study leads to priority actions for further investigation into the existing links between the dynamics of tourism and visiting museums in the variables, profile, motivation, and attractiveness, and it is particularly interesting to understand these dimensions of the behavior of students in general who travel to museums and how they take advantage of the visitation experience. To our knowledge, this study is fundamental: 1) for contributing to the current state of student interest in museums, leaving as a priority conclusion the need to include the promotion and “mandatory” visitation of existing museums around the educational institution. 2) for contributing to the promotion of the territory's heritage resources, being a fundamental opportunity to diversify the practical component of learning in this thematic area.

**Keywords:** cultural tourism, experience, heritage education, museum management.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The development of tourist activity in the museum logic has led heritage to an incessant appeal for its protection and appreciation by various entities. It is understood, on the one hand, that community involvement has become a fundamental part of heritage management processes through activities to raise awareness of the heritage that is in the custody of the various existing museums.

On the other hand, the interconnection between museums, tourism, and heritage education must (re)think of ways to ensure the benefit of all sectors of society in the dynamics of heritage preservation in a way connected with tourist activity.

Passing through heritage education contexts in this study, it is understood as an awareness process dedicated to demonstrating the importance of cultural heritage to be preserved and valued, heritage education could play a significant role.

Tourism enters this dynamic being marked by the action of visitation and knowledge of the cultural heritage, also ending up here in this context, by acquiring an educational sense, by the process of appropriation of the human resources materialized in the heritage(s).

For heritage education to fulfill its role as a mediator of museum and tourist activity, it is necessary to be interconnected with the process of acquiring knowledge, making it imperative to reflect on the need to safeguard and enhance heritage through tourist activity.

The contribution of tourism lies in the “local/regional/national/and international visibility of local culture, which depends a lot on how cultural manifestations are apprehended by visitors” [1]. In this domain, the museum aspect will be a strategic territorial investment in the promotion of heritage and tourist attractiveness.

Strategic cooperation between educational institutions, of different levels of education, municipalities, and other inter-municipal bodies, will contribute to a broad knowledge of the territory, enabling the development and reinforcement of territorial management in various areas.

A strategic commitment to heritage resources and existing museums is essential for local development to fit into an inclusive territorial perspective.

The meaning is “to value and enhance endogenous resources through various initiatives with the involvement and participation of all agents involved in the process. A vehicle for promoting local tourist activity is heritage education” [2].

In this sense, it is understood that this study on museums and the importance of knowing the reality of the territory of the existing museums in a city in Central Portugal by students of the professional higher technical course in tourism (level V course), could contribute to developing differentiated learning dynamics focused on museum attractiveness strategies.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and the expansion and diversification of the museum space has given way to a more performative integration of modern museum practices, emphasizing the relationship between material, immaterial, and digital heritage [3].

The rebirth of students' active involvement and motivation in museology theory and its connection to museum practice is fundamental [4].

Active and critical thinking is extremely important for students as future professionals in their connection to society.

Nowadays, social relations and knowledge are increasingly mediated by various institutions, recognized for creating, maintaining, and changing different types of information systems.

Museums have increasingly developed digital resources, which is still an opportunity for joint work at the level of educational institutions and museums.

The basic quality of the museum concept is perceived at the structural level. The reason for this is the fact that the techniques and technologies applied in museum work are applied when this activity exists and when it is ideologically determined [5].

Contemporary museums are often more concerned with engaging their visitors and catering to their needs and experiences.

Museums are not just research centers or information centers, but 'create' history and useful information for tourist activity in an interdisciplinary logic and when analyzing the museum as a cultural institution.

In this sense, research, identification, preservation, and communication of the museology of material manifestations of culture and nature must have as its main mission the preservation of heritage resources, interpreting and transmitting their meaning.

In this regard, the UNESCO conventions deal with “empowering” heritage education [6].

Its educational dimension intends to create a uniform and evolving system of educational measures aimed at various stakeholders and focusing on various levels of awareness [7].

Heritage education is an imminent part of the activities developed within the obligations of the States and must involve different actors, building networks with other actions based on different conventions.

The protection of cultural heritage is perceived as a global obligation. Cultural heritage is a non-renewable resource; therefore, its destruction or loss impoverishes world culture. Therefore, preventive actions are essential.

Therefore, UNESCO has been crucial in developing the existing legal framework around culture.

Heritage education is the process that enables people to learn about their heritage. This has traditionally been done in school settings where teachers use conventional instructional strategies.

One of the ways to achieve this objective is to carry out guided visits to the existing museums in the educational institution's area and relate them to all tourist and cultural activities.

Education is an important pillar in the mediation between museums and tourist appropriation, as well as the museum, as a social space, can serve mainly as a place for the visiting group to socialize, talk, and exchange opinions [8].

Museums serve the functions of collection, research, and exhibition, as well as education and recreation [9].

Within tourism, museums can be the main attraction for tourists, through the cultural and tourist experience they provide. Museums can serve as a legitimizing presence that lends authenticity to their exhibitions and experiences [10].

The participation of museums in cultural tourism is linked to their activities, such as digitization, presentation, and sale of new educational programs, among others [11].

All these cultural and tourist services within the museum context must be adapted to a diverse audience, as this is the only way to attract more visitors.

Changing the social, economic, and political system can be vectors for the integral development of tourism [12].

In this sense, the emphasis is on the shared experience, provided by a comfortable social space. Museums are tourist attractions, providing an authentic experience with plenty of interest and freedom to pursue social goals [13].

The museum institutions behind its implementation open countless learning opportunities for students.

These can be learned in museums in the same way as in non-formal 'schools', where educational activities are aligned with the general programs offered in a regular school [14], [15].

Many museum institutions (public and private) must be able to establish synergies for the benefit of tourist destinations and the visitors they receive [16].

In this dynamic between museums and their appropriation for tourism, especially in the context of cultural tourism and cultural motivations, linking tourism to heritage benefits the local economy.

Within this sphere of heritage, tourist destinations have a lot to gain, but it is necessary to safeguard cultural heritage. The potential of cultural heritage is increasingly being recognized in international policy and law-making as a social, cultural, and economic resource [17].

However, it represents a challenge for its safeguarding and presentation by museums. In this sense, international law has been calling for greater democratization of the heritage protection paradigm, namely through its identification, safeguarding, and management, with museums being able to play a fundamental role in its safeguarding and tourist enhancement.

In the dynamic between tourism and museums, raising awareness of the value of heritage is also fundamental. Education through museums, particularly from the perspective of “non-formal” education, that is, education that takes place outside formal educational environments, can have an impact on the entire museum and tourist experience.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study, within the dynamics of tourism and museums, has as its main objective to understand the habits of students visiting museums.

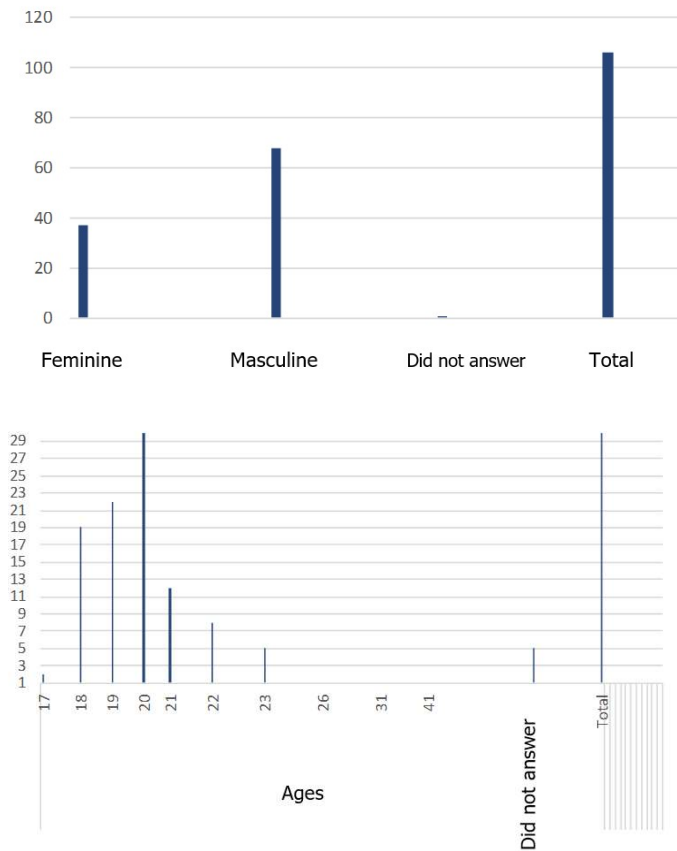
The study was applied to a group of students of the professional higher technical course in tourism (level V course), in a higher institution, geographically located in the Center of Portugal. For this study, a questionnaire was applied to these students. The questionnaire was divided into four sections.

The first one intends to understand how often students have the habit of visiting museums. The second is if students are in the habit of visiting other cultural facilities or heritage resources. Another section was directed at the perception of students' knowledge about the existence of existing museums in their city of residence, as students, especially how they had learned about the existence of museums. The last section also tried to understand the last time students visited a museum.

### 4. RESULTS

It was found that there is a greater number of males visiting museums, with only one respondent not responding (Figure 1). It can also be seen that there is a certain age discrepancy, however, most respondents are 20 years old (Figure 2).

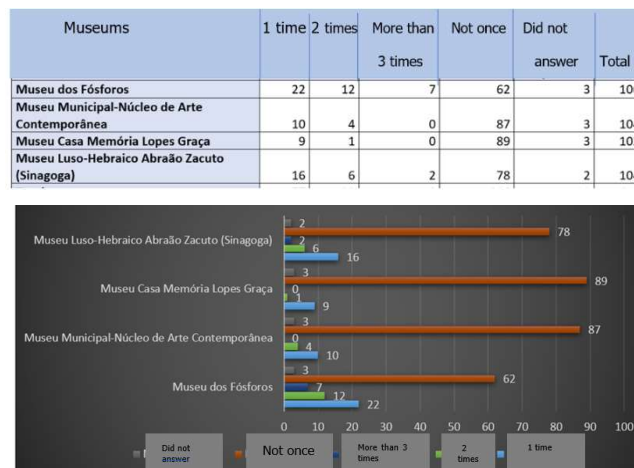
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**Figures 1 and 2. Gender and age of respondents**

Of the existing museums in the city, respondents indicated which one/which they had already visited and how many times. It should be noted that the best-known and most visited museum in the city is the Museu dos Fósforos and then the Museu Luso-Hebraico Abraão Zacuto (Sinagoga).

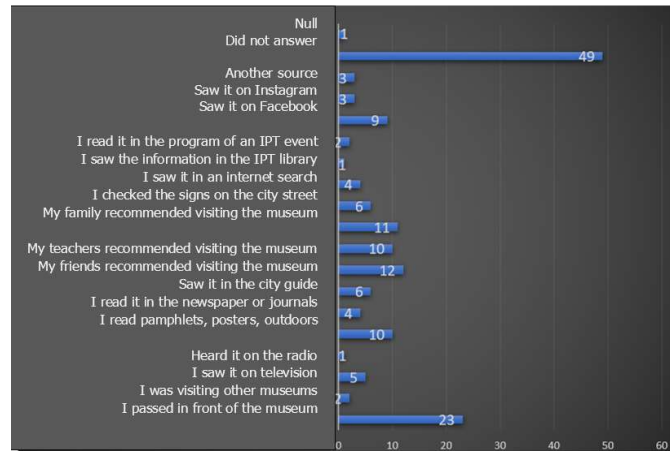
The least visited is the Museu Casa Memória Lopes Graça (Figure 3). Many students have never visited any of the city's museums.



**Figure 3. Identification of museums and number of visits**

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The most cited reasons for respondents to know of the existence of the museums they visited were because they “passed by the museum” and because “friends recommended visiting” (Figure 4).



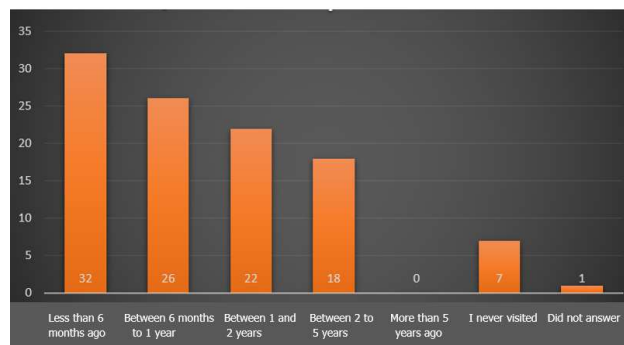
**Figure 4. Knowledge of the existence of the museum**

With less representation in terms of responses were “I heard it on the radio” and “I saw the information in the institution's library”.

It should be noted that there is a significant number of respondents who did not respond to this question.

This study also tried to understand when students last visited a museum (Figure 5). It appears that most respondents have not visited any museum for less than 6 months and between 6 months and 1 year. It can also be seen that seven respondents have never visited any museum. This result may be cause for concern, as it could mean a lack of interest in the contexts of heritage resources that could greatly interfere with the good development of tourist activity when entering the professional level.

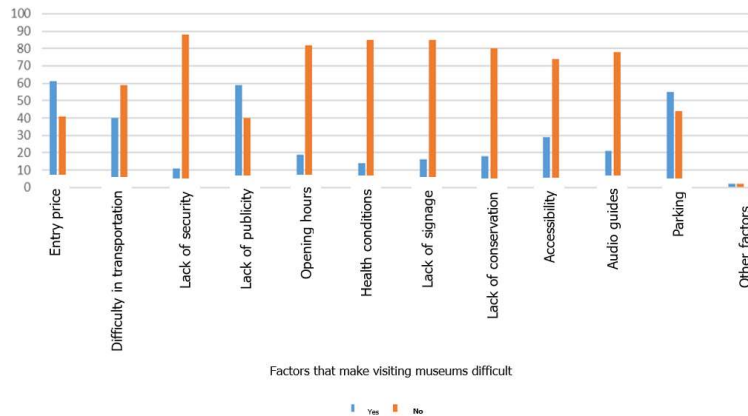
When did you last visit a museum?	Number of times
Less than 6 months ago	32
Between 6 months to 1 year	26
Between 1 and 2 years	22
Between 2 to 5 years	18
More than 5 years ago	0
I never visited	7
Did not answer	1
Total	106



**Figure 5. Last visit to a museum**

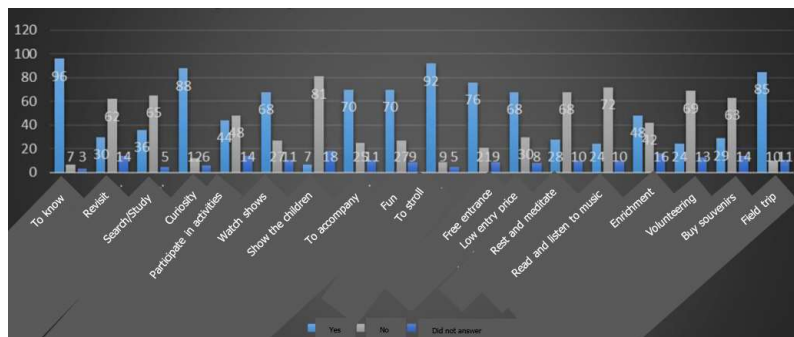
A section of the questionnaire also tried to understand which factors hinder visits to museums (Figure 6).

It should be noted that the answers to this question were “Yes” and “No”. In this sense, the most pertinent results for this question refer to a) entry price. R: “Yes” (61) and R: “No” (41); b) difficulty in transportation. R: “Yes” (40) and R: “No” (59); c) lack of security. R: “Yes” (11) and R: “No” (88); d) lack of disclosure/information. R: “Yes” (59) and R: “No” (40); e) opening hours R: “Yes” (19) and R: “No” (82); f) health condition does not allow. R: “Yes” (14) and R: “No” (85); g) lack of signage. R: “Yes” (16) and R: “No” (85); h) lack of preservation R: “Yes” (16) and R: “No” (80); i) accessibility. R: “Yes” (29) and R: “No” (74); j) audio guides. R: “Yes” (55) and R: “No” (44); k) parking difficulty. R: “Yes” (55) and R: “No” (44) and in the Other Factor 2 respondents answered, “lack of interest” and another 2 answered “lack of time”.



**Figure 6. Factors that make it difficult to visit museums**

Finally, this study tried to understand the main reasons for visiting museums (Figure 7).



**Figure 7. Main reasons for visiting museums**

As the main reasons for visiting museums, the study points mainly to “the desire to know”, “walking around” and “study visits”.

The least mentioned reasons go through the answers, such as “showing the children”, and “volunteering”. On the one hand, the results are in line with the reality of the respondents, about “showing it to their children”, since many respondents are young, without children. On the other hand, the answer about “volunteering” is worrying as it reveals that the respondents do not include in their habits the practice of volunteering in this area of museology and the dynamics of heritage resources.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Considering that this exploratory study was the first of its kind on the subject in this specific area, it is possible to confirm that the results are in line with expectations. As there is no theoretical framework that can be replicated under these conditions, as the basis of this work, this study started with the intention of making it as comprehensive as possible and of a broad spectrum.

So that conclusions can be drawn from what to improve in a future study and as a fundamental study for the knowledge of the museum reality, it can be replicated in other contexts of teaching level.

The quantitative analysis of this study showed that respondents still do not have enough habits of visiting museums.

This conclusion is favorable for future exploration, as it indicates that awareness strategies must be developed for this dynamic of museology and existing heritage resources in the territory.

In this sense, actions to raise awareness and encourage visits to museums and studies on them in the logic of developing tourism and cultural products should also be the motto of educational institutions that link the management of cultural heritage to tourism and vice versa.

Institutions will be able to direct their more practical curricular activities towards learning actions and student awareness, including their training aimed at the importance of developing the management of tourist activity.

This study was significant for the perception of the importance of the dynamics of tourism and museums. The results point to a scarce tendency for students to search for museums for visitation and knowledge.

It means that this study contributes to the current state of students' interest in museums, leaving as a priority conclusion the need to include the promotion and “mandatory” visitation of existing museums around the educational institution.

The existing museums in the territory contribute to the promotion of the territory's heritage resources, being a fundamental opportunity to diversify the practical component of learning in this thematic area.

This study opens doors to a line of research that can and should be improved with each new process, allowing the improvement of more practical curriculum development strategies that can capture students' attention to this field of museum visitation and experience.

## **6. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The conclusions provide a series of broad reflections on approaching this topic as a good practice for educational institutions, regardless of the level of education.

This study, more than focusing on literature review issues, is scarce and methodological, focusing on the quantitative method and the challenge of providing an integrated approach to a concrete reality that is the habits of visiting museums for their knowledge around teaching training residency.

This study represents, therefore, a challenge and at the same time an opportunity for the academy with training in teaching-tourism and cultural heritage to take care of.



The conclusions of this study also allow a focus on research change, including reflections on future theoretical and methodological challenges on this theme that relates to tourism and museums, as well as their visitation by students as a source of knowledge and evolutionary learning.

Finally, this study also contributes to considering the trajectory of educational institutions that have in their training plans the area of tourism and cultural heritage and the interconnection issues that may represent the future of tourism research.

It is in this sense that this study is considered to establish a fundamental line of investigation, as a theme for current and future deepening.

### 7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study can contribute to supporting managers of tourism organizations to have a more sustainable and diversified industry.

There are approaches and different theoretical and methodological orientations. It is understood that tourism organizations have benefited from being particularly close to the tourism industry.

The various stakeholders of tourism NGOs and other articulations with municipalities are evident in the forms of partnerships and collaborations that exist.

In general, tourism management, especially in marketing, motivations, behavioral, and decision-making studies, based on the use of factor analysis and clustering techniques, has contributed to a more sustainable and diversified industry.

### 8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The main limitation of this study is the comparative analysis between other courses at the same level of education.

Another limitation has to do with the exploratory statistical study that will serve as an initial anchor for the preparation of a more elaborate and concrete study considering the defined and analyzed variables.

Finally, it is understood that more in-depth investigations into the existing links between the dynamics of tourism and museum visitation in the variables, profile, motivation, and attractiveness should be a priority.

It is particularly interesting to understand these dimensions of student behavior in general that go to museums and how they take advantage of the visitation experience.

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