

**TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**



# THE ROLE OF MODERN ACCESSIBLE MEDIA IN CULTURAL TOURISM CONSUMPTION: A CASE STUDY OF GORJ COUNTY MUSEUM

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**Abstract:** *Cultural tourism is one of the most attractive resources for a community to leverage its culture. Oltenia is a region with rich cultural and touristic resources. Museums are one of the ways to explore the local cultural potential. The study aims to analyse the extent to which the use of modern means of digital tourist accessibility can increase the tourist attractiveness of museums. The working methods are specific to the analysis of accessibility, but the evaluation of tourist consumption was carried out differentiated by age groups of consumers, in the case of two of the museums managed by the Gorj County Museum in Targu Jiu (Museum of Art and Museum of Popular Architecture). The results show that modern means are attractive for all age groups, but there are differences in the degree of horizontal transmission of information (within the same target group). The limitations of this study are represented by the limited digital accessibility resources present in the two museums analysed. The study highlights the need to offer varied digital accessibility options that cater to modern consumers' preferences, such as QR codes tailored to the museum content.*

**Keywords:** *culture, museums, art, accessibility, tourist consumption*

## INTRODUCTION

Museums have been and still are a superior representation of local cultural values. These values are exhibited in such a way that they can be easily observed by all those who cross their threshold and come into contact with what the history of the place has to offer.

These cultural spaces support all those who want to discover art, culture and beauty, all together, benefiting from the help or support of those who deal with them as organization, exhibition and maintenance. From this

point of view, museum activity should be seen both in terms of the benefits brought to the community and as the central pillar in the education and culture of those interested.

### *Community benefits*

Cultural activities can be considered as a part of economic activities as well. From this point of view, museum activity must be seen, at the level of the institution and the community, as an economical addition to the cultural-educational one (Teodorescu: 2019; Dumitrascu et al.: 2023). This economic contribution does not refer directly to the revenue from museum tickets but, through the entire activity generated, to the visit of the geographical space in which the museum is located, to food consumption and accommodation spaces, in the case of people coming from another locality. A museum's role extends beyond merely carrying out cultural activities. It serves as a provider of valuable cultural information and can generate tourist services. Its significance lies in its potential to contribute to a region's cultural and economic growth, as it caters to the needs of cultural enthusiasts and tourists alike.

### *Cultural and educational benefits*

Visiting museums and participating in certain events they organise play a major role in cultivating a museum and creative culture among communities. Therefore, it is essential to analyse these cultural spaces and find the best solutions and means of attraction for all generations, but the target group should be the young population, by organising cultural and educational events with specific means (Ducman:2021; Merciu et al, 2022).

These events that can be organised in museum spaces (exhibitions or creative workshops) and can increase understanding between community members from different cultural backgrounds and act as building blocks for communities (Getz:1991, 1997; Mazilu et al: 2023; Lequeux-Dincă et al., 2022).

Exhibitions created by community members are often enjoyable events which reflect the community's culture and history and can also become an attraction for those outside the community (De Bres: 2001). In addition to providing cultural and educational opportunities for participants, museum events and museums through what they offer foster a sense of community pride (Mill & Morrison: 2002; Teodoresc: 2009; Szemkovics et al: 2018) and help preserve the cultural environment (Backman:1995). Also, this can help local communities develop their identity and create opportunities to share their culture and community development through visitors (Liang et al., 2008).

Museums, including memorial houses, provide educational and emotional value through art, architecture, and design.

Museums serve as a platform for artists to interact with the public and also provide an appropriate setting for people to understand and appreciate the messages conveyed by works of art (Peranson, 2008). According to Manolika, Baltzis and Tsigilis (2015), the primary reason for visiting museums is for learning, followed by socializing, spending time with family, seeking novelty, and escapism. Similarly, Lee, Arcodia and Lee (2012) state that cognitive benefits, such as expanding knowledge and learning new things, are the second most important motivating factor for attending multicultural events.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study was based on the quantitative analysis provided by the data about the importance of modern means of information for tourists visiting the two museums, both part of the Gorj County Museum: The Museum of Art (Fig. 1) and the Museum of Popular Architecture of Curtisoara (Fig. 2). The data were obtained through a questionnaire, applied on 214 people, with different ages and occupations.

The questions followed the role digital means could have inside the two museums we mentioned. Of these means, QR codes were in the centre of attention and the main means to be used.

### *Data analysis*

The study investigated the impact digital media could have on the consumption of museum tourism, seen as a socio-cultural impact. At the same time, it also investigated whether introducing QR codes as a digital means of presenting the exhibits in the two museums could provide subjective well-being or satisfaction for museum tourism consumers.

In this study, we also tracked the community benefits resulting from the satisfaction of museum tourism consumers and the cultural-educational benefits of tourists. Community benefits may result from consumption in general, through accommodation and meal services following tourism outlets. Community benefits also arise when the number of tourists in a locality is large. The city of Targu Jiu has an important tourist offer, but the tourists are oriented towards what "Brancusi" means. That is why the museum offer must be very attractive, not only through the price policy but also through the presentation offer, adapted to this period, dominated by digitalization. Tourist satisfaction can be achieved by taking into account



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced consumer behaviour, including museum tourism consumers. Technology is not only a tool that the younger generation is turning to, but it is visible, a generalisation of its use to all ages. Museums are no exception to these newly emerging requirements.

*The socio-cultural impact of digital media in the museum space*

Demographic structure of respondents	No. of pers.	%	Preference for use QR code (yes/no)	%	Preference for using digital media for art and architecture on holidays and visits	%
Gender						
Men	124	57.9%	111	89.5%	104	93.6%
Women	90	42.1%	90	100%	87	96.6%
Age						
Under 18 years	32	14.9%	32	100%	32	100%
18-24 years	33	15.4%	33	100%	33	100%
25-34 years	47	21.9%	47	100%	45	95.7%
35-54 years	31	14.4%	30	96.7%	28	93.3%
55-64 years	26	12.1%	22	84.6%	19	86.3%
Over 65 years	35	16.3%	28	80%	22	78.5%
Education						
Secondary school	59	27.5%	44	74.5%	32	72.7%
High School	78	36.4%	73	93.5%	73	100%
Vocational school	44	20.5%	42	95.4%	40	95.2%
University studies	19	8.8%	19	100%	19	100%
Postgraduate studies	14	6.5%	14	100%	14	100%
Frequency of visiting museums						
Weekly	52	24.2%	52	100%	51	98%
Monthly	101	47.1%	101	100%	101	100%
Half-yearly	23	10.7	18	78.2%	16	88.8%
Annual	27	12.6	21	77.7%	13	61.9%
Occasional	11	5.1%	-	-	-	-

\* The data was obtained from discussions with the museum visitors in Gorj county. Of the 214 people interviewed, 192 people expressed their intention to use a QR code, and out of these, 179 people even used apps to discover knowledge about certain monuments on holidays.

The multitude of exhibits is seen today in the Gorj county museums as an informative addition offered by those who care about the culture of this place. The museum spaces offer a generous variety that represents cultural richness.

Many tourists who visit museums may need to gain knowledge of the exhibits on display. Therefore, they seek guidance from specialist tour guides. Tourists appreciate the interactive information shared between them, the guide and the vast amount of information presented with intonation that can positively impact different groups of tourists. However, the disadvantage of human guiding is that it cannot accommodate a large number of tourists, and some may need help listening to the information or affording the guided tour. Despite museums being affordable, some tourists still need help to participate. The information the guide shares cannot be stored and replayed for later use. The only information retained is what was heard during the tour.

QR codes available for each exhibit allow tourists to access information about the exhibit at their convenience. However, there are both advantages and disadvantages to using these codes. On the positive side, accessing the information is very easy and can add a sense of fun to the experience of discovering cultural values. On the other hand, the disadvantage is that the information provided is presented rigidly and uniformly, which may not be suitable for all age groups. Therefore, it is essential to adapt the information content to make it accessible to everyone without sacrificing the scientific accuracy of the exhibits.

Of the museums under discussion, the Folk Art Museum of Curtisoara continues to be very attractive (Fig. 3). Here, peasant architecture, the art of working and combining wood and stone, continues to be of great interest. Besides this specific architecture of the area under the mountain, monuments such as the church and the Cula Tătărascu are unique constructions that support information about the specific architecture of a certain period.

Despite this extraordinary offer, visitor satisfaction does not influence visitor flows, at least at the level of advertising on social networks or tourist sites such as [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com). The existence of a professional tour guide is the most common criticism from those who cross the threshold of the Folk Art Museum. Appreciation is for the quietness offered, the memories created in each tourist's mind, and the landscape of the countryside of yesteryear.

However, the need for change is evident when analysing the large groups of visitors. It is the technology that can attract and lead to tourist

satisfaction. Implementing QR codes for museum exhibits would lead to at least two benefits: increasing the attractiveness of museum tourism for the young generation, who are technology consumers. Another beneficial thing would be learning through play, which is what culture in general means. How do you check these things? By scanning codes and creating games where they can answer specific questions. This game creates an environment that meets visitors' requirements and leads to knowledge of cultural values. The goal, in this sense, can be achieved!



Fig. 4. Important monuments owned by the Folk Art Museum of Curtisoara (Gorj county)

Tourism satisfaction also offers a horizontal extension: the transmission from one consumer to another without resorting to a social network or other means. It is a simple form of advertising that museums need. Cultural tourism requires a certain degree of knowledge. It can amplify the need for discovery. School activities and information received or offered in the subjects covered can lay the foundations for such tourism. It can reinforce and enrich the knowledge of everyone who crosses the threshold of museums. Based on the analysis of the word cloud that depicts the requirements and preferences of tourists in the two museums, it is

evident that they are inclined towards modern amenities. Tourists prefer interactive panels, QR codes, professional guidance, and other contemporary means of information dissemination.

The traditional way of presenting information in museums, with the help of the staff, is undoubtedly helpful for gaining knowledge. However, there are certain limitations to this method. For instance, not all visitors can listen to explanations if the group is too large. Also, some visitors might need help paying attention for too long or may get distracted by other exhibits, sounds, or discussions. Therefore, having written information available that visitors can refer back to would be a great addition.

Information boards can be limited due to their space constraints, despite their ability to provide knowledge.

Considering all of this, technology can enhance tourist satisfaction by catering to both younger and older generations through attractive forms in the long term. The main focus of museums nowadays is to attract the younger generation. This is because they tend to be consumers of museum tourism for a longer period of time, and can pass on their interest in cultural values to their families. This can help create a society that appreciates the cultural offerings of the area. However, it is important to note that the museum's offerings are not limited to any particular age group. Play, technology and education are not limited. The pleasure of discovery has no age limit! This is also evident from the data received from respondents to the questionnaire. People aged 55+ and 65+ use technology on holidays, and they believe that QR codes or other modern means would be beneficial.

The limitations of this study are represented by the difficulty of implementing modern means, but they could be overcome by the effort of those who are involved in this cultural-creative activity. The results of the study are also slightly limited due to the small number of people interviewed and the length of time it took to obtain them (being a single year).

## CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between museum tourism and technology is becoming more necessary with time. Recent events, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, have raised new questions about consumption in general and tourism consumption in particular. The online environment for tourism consumption has developed significantly, which is why virtual tours and museum websites have emerged to support consumers. However, there is a growing demand for more advanced experiences among tourists and visitors. They no longer settle for simple viewing but seek to participate in

the cultural knowledge process. Many of them visit museums online and then physically visit them for further study. Therefore, we should not regress in knowledge but rather increase it. This can be achieved by continuing to offer modern technological means that complement the information they already have.

Another thing that influences the evaluation of Romanian museums is the freedom of movement and the possibility for the museum tourism consumer to compare with other museums worldwide. Consumers' expectations of cultural tourism and museum tourism are growing. The museums of Gorj county must evolve from the traditional image of the Romanian village of the past century. While that image is essential, it must also present each exhibit element understandably. This includes providing the names of the components, the place of origin, the history of each piece, the specific colours used, and the history behind the route to the museum. It is also important to showcase the life of the families from which the artefacts were obtained, including details about each element within the house, the symbols used, and the influences present. This information should be presented in an easily accessible format, available in several languages to make it accessible to non-Romanian speakers.

The cultural heritage of Gorj county is widely known among those who are interested. Many people and culture enthusiasts tend to associate Gorj county with Brancusi. While this association is undoubtedly important, Gorj county has much more to offer. The "more" needs to be brought to the forefront and made known. Modern technology and communication means can help achieve this. Properly utilised, technology can enhance and promote local culture without diminishing its cultural value.

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