

## WHO IS VISITING UNIVERSITIES? GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS OF CAMPUS-BASED TOURISM

Inês Almeida<sup>1</sup>

Luís Silveira<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract:**

The identification of predominant characteristics of the demand and market segmentation in tourism are relevant tools for optimising the management of tourist attractions and promotional efforts. The benefits include the improvement and creation of products better suited to the specificities of demand and the development of more effective and adjusted marketing strategies.

Campus-based tourism is a growing niche in cultural tourism. Some of the cultural attractions of most prestigious and/or ancient universities in Western Europe are attracting over one million visitors per year; and several university campuses in China are visited by an average of 4,000 individuals per day. Nonetheless, the knowledge about the characteristics and motivations of the public(s) visiting universities is still very scarce.

Based on secondary data collection and analysis of previous global case studies, this research aimed to identify publics, key markets and common socio-demographic characteristics and motivations of universities' visitors. The results show that cultural assets in universities are targeting and attracting different publics: educational-driven visitors (internal and external to the university), local community and cultural tourists (national and international). Universities are attracting mainly domestic tourists, who have high education qualifications and travel with family (mainly with children).

**Keywords:** campus-based tourism, cultural tourism, tourism demand, university

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cultural tourism has become, in terms of supply and demand, one of the main tourism segments worldwide (Paiva, 2016; Richards, 2018). UNWTO (2019, p. 30) defines cultural tourism as “a type of tourism activity in which the visitor’s essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination”. As the segment is growing

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Coimbra, CEGOT, Faculty of Arts and Humanities. inesalmeida18@hotmail.com (corresponding author)

<sup>2</sup> University of Coimbra, CEGOT, Faculty of Arts and Humanities. luis.silveira@uc.pt

and maturing and the elements considered as part of the term ‘culture’ are constantly expanding, several academics are now understanding cultural tourism as an umbrella product that can be disaggregated into more specific products related to niches of interest with a cultural focus (Du Cros & McKercher, 2015; Richards, 2018; Smith, 2003). For example, Csapó (2012) identifies seven types of cultural tourism from a thematic perspective: heritage tourism; cultural thematic routes; cultural city tourism/cultural tours; traditions/ethnic tourism; event and festival tourism; religious tourism/pilgrimage routes; and creative tourism.

Considering the diversity of cultural tourism subsegments, it becomes important for tourist destinations and cultural attraction’s managers to understand in which typologies of cultural tourism their assets fit. This process of segmentation allows a “better programming, development, promotion and commercialisation of the respective tourism products” (Cavaco & Simões, 2009, p. 30). Even at the same destination or attraction, different tourists may have different motivations and seek different experiences (Prentice, 1993). Knowing the characteristics and needs of visitors to an attraction or tourist destination is to have better chances of successfully marketing and promote that attraction/destination (McKercher et al., 2002; Prentice, 1993).

Cultural tourism in universities, defined as campus-based or campus tourism by several academics (Mangi et al., 2019; McManus et al., 2021), is one of the fastest growing cultural (urban) tourism niches in recent years (Li et al., 2021). Some of the cultural attractions of the most prestigious and/or ancient universities in Western Europe are attracting over one million visitors per year; and several university campuses in China are visited by an average of 4,000 individuals per day (McManus et al., 2021). Although several academics have conducted empirical research on tourism demand in specific universities (e.g., Mangi et al., 2019; McManus et al., 2021; Shammi et al., 2020), knowledge about the characteristics and motivations of the public(s) who visit universities is still very scarce.

The purpose of this exploratory research is to identify publics, key markets and common socio-demographic characteristics and motivations of tourists who visit universities. The findings are based on the collection and analysis of previous research addressing tourism for universities’ cultural assets and on the collection of secondary data through electronic contact with selected institutions globally.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW: CULTURAL TOURISM IN UNIVERSITIES**

The link between universities and cultural tourism can be traced back at least to the ‘Grand Tour’<sup>3</sup> (McManus et al., 2021). However, this association has significantly narrowed in the recent decades due to factors such as the need for institutions to create alternative forms of income, the progressive opening of universities to the external community, the growing valorisation of university heritage, the representation of university campuses on popular culture and the branding of tourism destinations structured around these institutions (Albino, 2015; Kozak, 2007; Mangi et al., 2019; Woodward, 2013).

---

<sup>3</sup> Educational and cultural travel undertaken by young aristocrats around European cultural centres, with origin in the seventeenth century (Connell, 2000).

Considering the variety of available tourism resources related to universities (Woodward, 2013), distinctive segments are being explored. Educational tourism, from a formal perspective, is explored through school visits, short courses, open days, academic tourism (international students mobility), and other formats (Albino, 2015; Connell, 1996; Tomasi et al., 2020). Universities are also scientific tourism destinations, as they host researchers to conduct investigation in their facilities and/or to present research results in conferences or other types of scientific meetings (Kosiewicz, 2014). Higher education institutions also provide facilities and services for business meetings, accommodation for occasional tourists, and other services (Connell, 2000; Li et al., 2021).

But beyond the educational-oriented approach, several universities are being recognised as having a mature supply in terms of cultural attractions and a growing cultural tourism demand (Mangi et al., 2019). Elements such as historic buildings, museum collections, libraries and archives, cultural and sport facilities, events open to the general public, scenic landscapes and academic traditions, and environment in general are attracting thousands to millions of visitors per year to these institutions (BiGGAR Economics, 2017; Gumprecht, 2007; Kozak, 2007; Mangi et al., 2019; Woodward, 2013).

Some authors refer to campus-based tourism (or campus tourism) as a niche segment in cultural and urban tourism (e.g., Cheng et al., 2020; Mangi et al., 2019; McManus et al., 2021; Woodward, 2013) related directly to universities (or other formats of higher education institutions). Despite a relatively robust academic discussion on campus-based tourism in China (Jaunis et al., 2021; McManus et al., 2021), research on this topic is still scarce worldwide (Connell, 2000; S. Woodward, 2013). Even so, some authors have presented their own definitions of campus-based tourism. Mangi et al. (2019, p. 3) advocate a cultural and leisure-focused perspective as, according to them, “campus tourism basically refers to visit the higher learning institutions’ unique architecture, aesthetic scenery, rich cultural heritage and academic atmosphere”. The definition of McManus et al. (2021, p. 1) is slightly broader, including educational motivations: “one-off or infrequent visitations by an organised tour group or individual(s) to a university, or similar educational institution, for purposes other than accommodation, employment or business, primarily with an aesthetic and/or educational objective.”. In addition, some authors include the accommodation in university campuses as an aspect of campus-based tourism (e.g., Connell, 2000; Li et al., 2021).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Considering the lack of literature on campus-based tourism and particularly on the demand characteristics of the segment, an exploratory approach was adopted on this research. Data analysis from secondary sources was the method used to achieve the proposed objective(s): to identify the publics, key markets and common socio-demographic characteristics and motivations of university visitors.

In terms of sources, the data collection began by identifying and analysing previous studies and reports that address the volume and/or characteristics of cultural tourists at universities. This process occurred in parallel with the literature review phase.

In a second phase, a set of universities at global level were approached to participate in the research by providing information about their tourism demand. To determine the universities to be included in the study, four inclusive criteria were defined:

- Antiquity: Due to their rich history, heritage and architecture, ancient universities are considered as particularly attractive for tourists (McManus et al., 2021; Shull, 2011; Woodward, 2013). The oldest universities in the world were considered for the present research, as well as by region (Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Europe, Middle East, North America, and Oceania).
- Reputation/prestige: The recognition of the excellence of an educational institution contributes to its tourism attractiveness (Albino, 2009; Rose et al., 2017). The results of three university rankings (QS World University Rankings; Times Higher Education World University Ranking; Shanghai ranking – Academic ranking of world universities) from 2020 were crossed to determine the *best* universities in the world and by region. Additionally, the eight Ivy League universities were considered, due to the connotations of excellence and elitism associated with these universities from the United States of America (USA).
- The UNESCO label: Some authors consider that the UNESCO label has become a tourism brand with immediate worldwide visibility (e.g., Castillo-Manzano et al., 2021; Merendeiro, 2017; Moreira et al., 2020). The five university campuses classified as World Heritage Sites were included in the study.
- The most beautiful/visitable: Tourists visiting universities also value campus beauty and aesthetic (Gumprecht, 2007; Mangi et al., 2019). For instance, the recognition of Universiti Malaysia Sabah as the most beautiful university in Southeast Asia increased the number of (international) visitors to the institution (Jaunis et al., 2021). This criterion was addressed by cross-referencing universities included in lists of reputable online travel sources regarding the most beautiful universities to visit.

In addition to these criteria, universities included in previous research on campus-based tourism were also considered. Any of the universities identified in the previous criteria which do not promote tourist attractions on their institutional website were excluded from the process. Forty-eight universities were selected for the study.

Between the end of June and October 2021, 188 tourist attractions and services associated with the 48 universities were asked, via email, to provide information on their tourism demand (Table 1). Those entities that did not respond until the end of October 2021, were notified again in a second phase (December 2021 to January 2022). Three main elements were requested:

- Annual and monthly visitors number from the most recent years.
- Socio-demographic characteristics of the visitors.
- The percentage/number of visitors from school groups and from the university.

**Table 1.** Response from entities

	Entities which responded				Entities which did not reply
	Entities which provided information	Entities which do not /cannot provide information	Stand-by	Total responses	
First phase (June-October 2021)	30	13	9	52	136
After the second phase (December 2021)	40	21	11	72	116

Source: Own elaboration (2022)

The first phase of contact had a response rate of 27.7% of entities; the rate ascended to 38.3% after the second round of contact. Of the entities that responded to the request, 55.5% (40) shared information, 29.2% (21) were unable to provide information, and 15.3% (11) responded but are yet to provide the requested data. Summarily, forty entities from twenty-six universities provided information.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. General visitors' numbers

Thirty-six of forty entities (90%) that provided information have statistical data, or at least estimates, on the annual number of visitors (Table 2). The main reason for the entities not having such information is that the attractions are free admission.

The few attractions with more than 200,000 visitors per year are concentrated in Europe. Some university attractions in North and South America can attract between 50,000 to 199,999 visitors per year. The assets which attract less than 10,000 visitors per year correspond, mainly, to teaching and research-focused museum collections with specific themes.

Other sources show that all Oxford University museums and most Cambridge University museums (7 out of 9 museums) attracted more than 50,000 visitors in 2019 (ALVA, 2022). The Universiti Malaysia Sabah received 351,098 visitors in 2019 (Jaunis et al., 2021).

Other Asian universities may have considerable visitor volumes, as Zhang (2017, cited by McManus et al., 2021) stated that the universities of Tsinghua and Peking (China), together, received around 430,000 visitors during 2017. Durham University (UK) attracts around 30,000 visitors on guided tours each year (Woodward & Carnegie, 2020).

**Table 2.** Categories of visitors’ numbers by attraction, in 2019

<b>Number of visitors</b>	<b>Tourist attractions (university, country)</b>
200,000 visitors or more/year (4)	Botanical Garden (Uppsala, Sweden); Old Library (TCD, Ireland); University Church (Oxford, UK); University of Coimbra (Portugal)
100,000 to 199,999 visitors/year (7)	Science Gallery Dublin (TCD, Ireland); Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences (Cambridge, UK); Botanic Garden and Arboretum (Oxford, UK); Athletic events (Princeton, USA)*; University Art Museum (Princeton, US)*; Morris Arboretum (Pennsylvania, US)*; Botanic Garden (Vienna, Austria)
50,000 to 99,999 visitors/year (5)	Botanical Garden (Bologna, Italy); Gustavianum Museum (Uppsala, Sweden); Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art (Cornell, USA)*; Museu Republicano Convenção de Itu (São Paulo, Brazil); Museum of Zoology (São Paulo, Brazil)
25,000 to 49,999 visitors/year (6)	Palazzo Poggi Museum (Bologna, Italy); Giovanni Capellini Museum (Bologna, Italy); Campus tours (Princeton, USA)*; Campus tours (Cornell, US); Natural History Museum (Tartu, Estonia); Center for Scientific and Cultural Dissemination (São Paulo, Brazil)
10,000 to 24,999 visitors/year (6)	Campus tours of the central campus of Ciudad Universitaria (UNAM, México); Dietrich Schiel Observatory (São Paulo, Brazil); Museum of Veterinary Anatomy (São Paulo, Brazil); Comparative Anatomy Collection, Luigi Cattaneo Collection of Anatomy, Zoology Collection (Bologna, Italy); Museum of Classical Archaeology (Cambridge)*
Less than 10,000 visitors/year (26)	Zoological Museum (TCD, Ireland); Campus tours (Edinburgh, UK); Campus tours (Pretoria, South Africa); Wolf Center (U. of Veterinary Medicine, Austria); Campus tours (Tokyo, Japan), Casa Yayá (São Paulo, Brazil), Campus tours (ETH Zurich, Switzerland); Museum of Foreign Debt (Buenos Aires, Argentina); Students European Museum, Museo della Specola, Anthropology Collection, Mineralogy Collection, Domestic Animal Anatomy Collection, Collection of Anatomical Pathology and Veterinary Teratology (Bologna, Italy); Museum of Anthropology, Botanical Museum, Educational Museum of Veterinary Medicine, Enrico Bernardi Museum of Machines, Geography Museum, Museum of Archaeological Sciences and Art, Museum of Astronomical Instruments, Museum of Education, Museum of Geology and Palaeontology, Museum of Mineralogy, Museum of Pathological Anatomy, Museum of the History of Physics, Museum of Zoology (Padova, Italy)

\*- data corresponding to the 2018/19 academic year. Source: Own elaboration (2022)

## **4.2. Publics/Audiences**

Du Cros & McKercher (2015) refer that recurrently the same cultural asset serves several user groups, such as tourists, school groups and residents, who value and seek benefits from the asset in different ways. This reality is particularly evident in university cultural assets, considering that the three main missions of universities – teaching, research and knowledge transfer (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020; Kozak, 2007) – create the necessity to respond to the characteristics and needs of different publics.

### **4.2.1. Previous literature**

Often, the primary and main user of university cultural assets is not the tourist but the academic community, with learning and research needs (Woodward, 2013). Specifically, it is common for museum collection to collaborate with university departments to enhance teaching and research opportunities (Oxford Economics, 2017), through internships, collaboration on research projects, specialised guided tours, and others.

Universities are increasingly promoting public engagement and a closer relationship with the territory within they are located (Albino, 2009; McManus et al., 2021; Woodward, 2013). Thus, the university’s cultural agenda and facilities, in addition to serving the academic community, are also used by residents (Gumprecht, 2007; Mangi et al., 2019). For instance, Silva & Carvalho (2017) found that most visitors to the University of Coimbra Botanical Garden are residents. Furthermore, several university museums and galleries develop specific programmes to engage with residents, namely volunteer programmes, community events, and reduced admission prices.

Often, universities offer special programmes for school groups. In fact, school visits provide a means to attract future students (Kozak, 2007). Most university museums and collections have educational services. In one modest example, school children represent around 6% of visitors to Durham University on organised tours (2,000 of about 32,000 visitors on organised tours) (Woodward & Carnegie, 2020).

The report *Economic Impact of the University of Oxford* (Biggar Economics, 2017) provides some numbers about higher education, schools, and local community engagement of the University of Oxford Museums. In terms of community engagement, the university was attracting around 1,200 volunteers a year at that time. Around 100,000 students were visiting the museums through the schools’ outreach programmes. In 2014/15, over 8,000 higher education students from over 100 national and international institutions visited the University Museums.

Finally, the cultural assets of universities also attract day-trip visitors and tourists (national and international) (Albino, 2009; Jaunis et al., 2021; Mangi et al., 2019; Woodward & Carnegie, 2020). Considering tourists’ motivations for visiting universities, researchers further identify two particular audiences within tourism demand: prospective students (Mangi et al., 2019; McManus et al., 2021; Woodward & Carnegie, 2020) and alumni (Schofield & Fallon, 2012).

Schofield & Fallon (2012) investigated the alumni community as a repeat visitor market. The research focused on the motivations and constraints for alumni to return to a university destination in the UK. The results showed that alumni are a propense market to return to the

destination (almost 90% of the respondents), that frequently bring other people (70.7%), and that are likely to recommend the destination to others (86.3%).

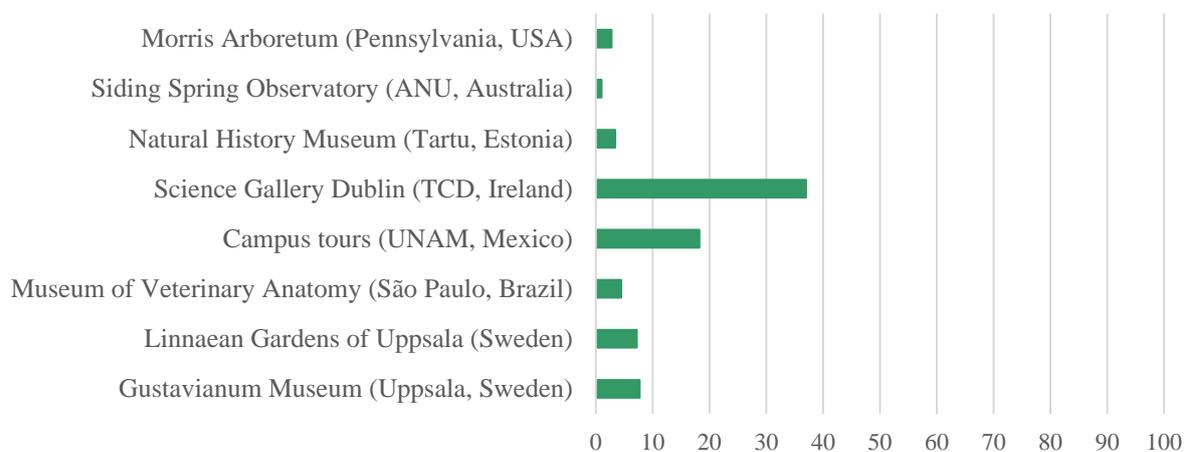
#### 4.2.2. Secondary data

Considering the publics previously identified, entities were asked to provide information (statistics) on school and academic visitors and on the provenance of visitors.

Regarding the academic community intern to the university, eight respondents provided statistical data (Figure 1). Six of the entities contacted admitted that they do not collect this type of information.

The academic (intern) community represents less than 10% of visitors at most attractions; only at Science Gallery Dublin (37%) at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Campus tours at the central campus of Ciudad Universitaria (UNAM – Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) (18.23%) the percentage of visitors from the institution is higher. In the first case, the fact that the focus of the Gallery is to attract local visitors may contribute to a higher relevance of the internal public. Some entities further disaggregate internal visitors between students and staff: Morris Arboretum (31.1% students and 68.9% staff), Tartu Natural History Museum (71% students and 29% staff) and Linnaean Gardens of Uppsala (60.8% students and 39.2% staff).

**Figure 1.** Visitors from the institution by attraction (%)



Source: Own elaboration (2022)

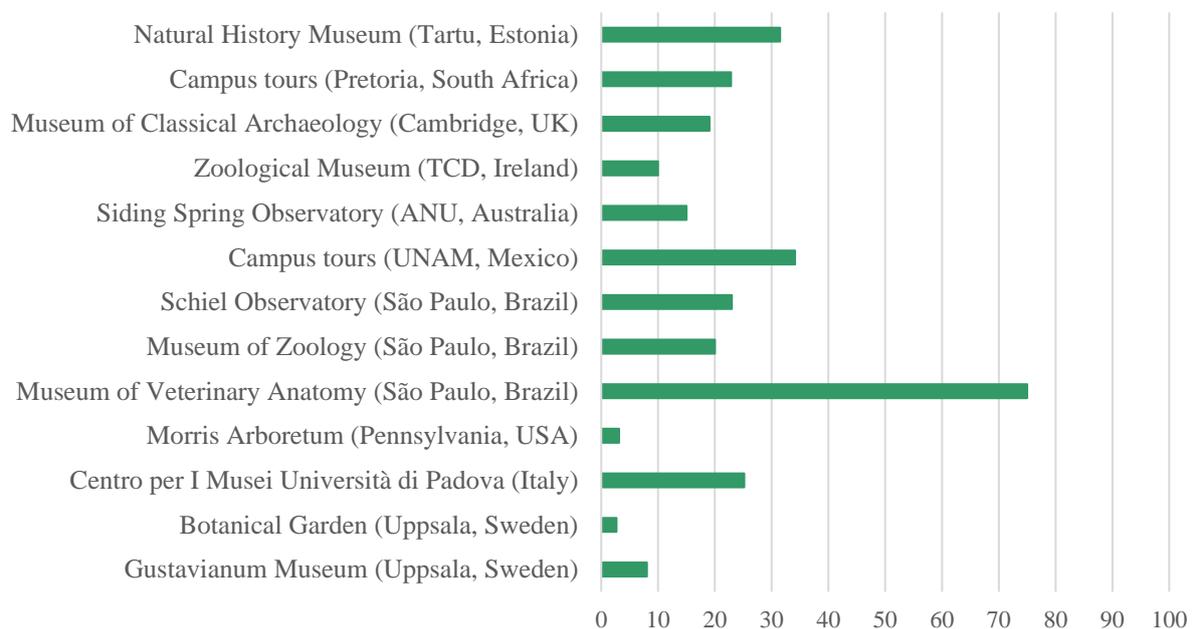
Five of the thirty-four university groups that visited the Museum of Veterinary Anatomy (São Paulo, Brazil) in 2019 consisted of students from the university. Although not being supported by statistical information, the respondent from the University of Bologna Museum Network reported that four out of fourteen collections open to the public are mostly visited by university students and professors: Giacomo Ciamician Chemistry Collection, Collection of Physics Instruments, Domestic Animal Anatomy Collection and Collection of Anatomical Pathology and Veterinary Teratology. For example, the Harry Brookes Allen Museum

(Melbourne, Australia) did not provide information as it is a teaching and research collection, therefore, only open to the academic community.

Thirteen entities shared statistical data on school group visits (Figure 2). Twelve of the contacted attractions/organisms admitted that they do not collect this type of information.

School groups account for 10% or more of visitors at about 69% (9) of the attractions which provided statistical data. The average weight of school groups in the total number of visitors is 21,71%.

**Figure 2.** Visitors from school groups by attraction (%)



Source: Own elaboration (2022)

ETH Zurich Tours receives about 50 school groups per year and the respondent from Casa Yayá (São Paulo, Brazil) stated that most guide tours are booked by local schools. Some institutions collect data about school visits, but do not have statistics on the total number of visitors to the attraction (usually because admission is free); thus, it is impossible to calculate the relevance of this specific audience in relation to the total number of visitors. This is the case of Natural History Museum (UNE, New Zealand), Mount Stromlo Observatory (ANU, Australia), Wolf Center (U. of Veterinary Medicine, Austria) and Koch Institute Public Galleries (MIT, USA).

In terms of local community, the respondent from Science Gallery Dublin (TCD, Ireland) reported that their activity addresses local visitors.

Some entities, namely those responsible for campus tours, referred that most of their public are prospective students (and families), such as the universities of Edinburgh (UK) and Princeton (USA).

### **4.3. Tourism demand**

The tourism demand for the cultural assets of universities was analysed in terms of nationalities, other socio-demographic characteristics, and motivations.

#### **4.3.1. Key markets/nationalities**

##### 4.3.1.1. Previous literature

Previous literature affirms the relevance of the Chinese market in campus-based tourism. According to McManus et al. (2021), the niche segment flourished in China and, from there, expanded to other territories due, immensely, to outbound tourism from the Asian country. In fact, university campuses are one of the most popular tourist attractions/destinations for domestic tourism in China (Mangi et al., 2019; McManus et al., 2021).

In addition, the Chinese market is asserting itself as an important international market in campus-based tourism. The majority of both organized groups and individual tourists visiting the University of Sydney (Australia) come from China (McManus et al., 2021). Chinese tourists represented around 80% of the international tourists visiting the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (Malaysia) in 2019; other regions and countries with some expression in visiting the university are South Korea, Europe (particularly UK) and USA (Jaunis et al., 2021). Some interesting results arise from the comparison between the university visitors and tourist arrivals by nationality in Sabah. Although China and South Korea are respectively the first and second most important tourist markets in the city, the UK and Ireland are only the 7<sup>th</sup> region with the most arrivals in Sabah and the USA the 10<sup>th</sup> (Sabah Tourism, 2020).

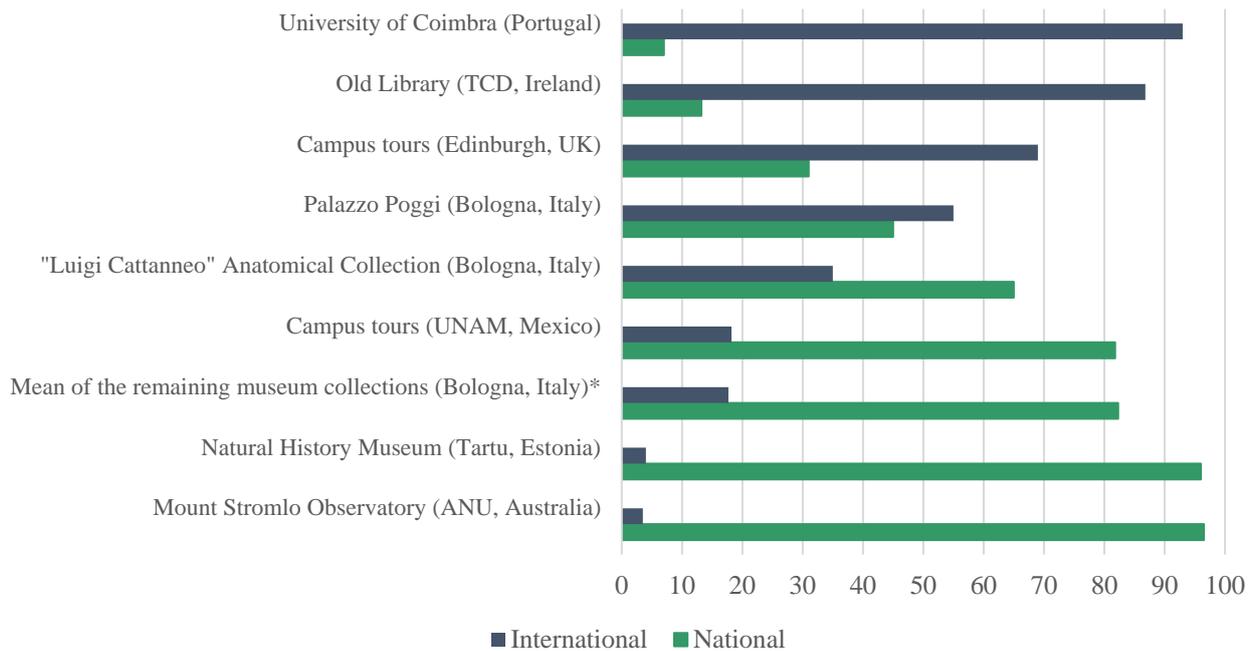
##### 4.3.1.2 Secondary data

Twenty-three of the contacted entities admitted that they do not collect information about the visitors' country of origin; of them, seven respondents shared non-statistical information. Seven entities shared statistical data on national versus international visitors, but only three of them collect information on the nationalities of visitors.

In terms of attractions which provided statistical data, only four were able to attract more international visitors than national visitors during 2019 (Figure 3): University of Coimbra (Portugal) with 93% of international tourists; Old Library (TCD, Ireland) with 86,8%; Campus tours (Edinburgh, UK) with 69%; and Palazzo Poggi (University of Bologna, Italy) with 55%. All four are European institutions. The universities of Bologna and Coimbra are two of the oldest universities in the world. In addition, the UNESCO label attributed to the University of Coimbra in 2013 has contributed to the growth in the number of international visitors (Moreira et al., 2020). The Old Library is located at Ireland's capital and is the fourth most visited fee-charging attraction of the country. The University of Edinburgh is located in Scotland's capital city; however, campus tours are mainly sought by prospective international students.

In relation to the non-statistical information provided by respondents, the majority of Oxford University Church’s visitors are international. Six respondents stated that the cultural assets they represent attract mainly the domestic market: Campus Tours (ETH Zurich, Switzerland), Museum of Veterinary Anatomy (São Paulo, Brazil), Siding Spring Observatory (ANU, Australia), Morris Arboretum (Pennsylvania, USA), Koch Institute Public Galleries (MIT, USA), and Zoological Museum (TCD, Ireland).

**Figure 3.** National and international visitors in 2019 by university attraction (%)



Source: Own elaboration (2022)

The scarcity of university attractions collecting data on the country of origin of visitors makes it difficult to generalise the results. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that proximity markets (geographic and cultural) are relevant for the three attractions that provided statistical information (Table 3). The only country of origin of the main markets visiting the Old Library that does not correspond to Ireland’s main markets is China (Tourism Ireland, 2020), which relates positively to the results of previous studies indicating the Chinese market as one of the main drivers of the development of campus-based tourism. Regarding the University of Coimbra, three of the main markets which visit the University are not in the top 10 markets in terms of overnight stays in the Centro de Portugal region (Delloite, 2019): Japan, Canada, and Israel. The Israeli market may be a specific market for this University, as the institution holds a collection of rare Jewish manuscripts, including a copy of the Abravanel Hebrew Bible, and is embedded in a popular destination for Israeli genealogical tourists (Santos et al., 2018).

The Gustavianum Museum (Uppsala, Sweden) is mainly visited by Swedish, Finnish, German, and English tourists, according to the respective respondent; these nationalities concur to Uppsala city’s main tourist markets (Visitory, 2022). Besides the majority of national visitors, the Siding Spring Observatory (ANU, Australia) receives some German backpackers.

**Table 3.** Top international tourist markets in 2019, by university attraction

Ranking	University of Coimbra (Portugal)		Old Library (TCD, Ireland)		Natural History Museum (Tartu, Estonia)	
	Country	%	Country	%	Country	%
1	Brazil	14	USA	31.1	Estonia	96
2	France	13	Ireland	13.2	Latvia	1.4
3	USA	10	Germany	7.7	Finland	1.4
4	Italy	9	France	7.6		
5	Spain	9	Italy	6.5		
6	Portugal	7	UK	6.5		
7	Germany	6	Spain	3.8		
8	Japan	4	China	2.4		
9	Canada	3				
10	Israel	3				
	Others	22	Others	21.1	Others	1.2

Legend: Gray – national/domestic market

Source: Own elaboration (2022)

### 4.3.2 Socio-demographic characteristics

#### 4.3.2.1 Previous literature

The results of a survey conducted between March and April 2019 among visitors to the University of Coimbra (Portugal) showed that 79.3% of respondents have a high education qualification, and an average age of 47 years (Rocha, 2019).

The socio-demographic characterisation of respondents from a survey conducted on visitors to Jahangirnagar University (Bangladesh) between November and December 2019 (Shammi et al., 2020), showed that almost half of the respondents have an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (46%). In terms of professional occupation, 44.26% of the visitors are students, followed by teachers (18.03%) and business workers (13.11%). Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the respondents visited the university with family and 19.67% with friends. No foreign tourists were inquired; 37% of respondents travelled less than 50 kilometres to their destination and 72% made a day trip, which suggests that local and regional residents are the main public of the university campus. Only 4.10% of respondents were aged 51 or older; the

most representative groups were 11-20 years (31.96%) and 21-30 (31.15%), followed by 31-40 (24.59%).

One third of the respondents to a survey of Chinese tourists at the University of Sydney (Australia) visited the university through an organised group. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the tourists with booked visits were aged 50 years or older (McManus et al., 2021).

#### 4.3.2.2 Secondary data

Only three respondents provided socio-demographic information in addition to the provenance/nationality of the visitors.

Between 2016 and 2019, 59.5% of Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo’s visitors were female. In terms of age, the most representative group of visitors to the UNAM’s museum was 20-39 years old (46.5%), followed by under 19 (29%) and 40-59 (18.5%); the least representative group was over 60 (6%). Over 75% of visitors held a higher education degree.

Considering generational segments, Millennials (25-40 years) are the main group of visitors to Arnold Arboretum (Harvard, USA), representing 25% to 35% of total visitors; Baby Boomers, and Silent and Greatest generations (over 60) are the least representative group (10 to 15% of total visitors). Generation X, generation Z and generation Alpha represent about 20% of visitors each. Families with children represent around 25% of Arboretum visitors.

The majority of independent visitors to the Natural History Museum (Tartu, Estonia) are families with children.

### 4.3.3 Motivations

Understanding tourists’ needs and motivations allows designing products and activities best suited to them (McKercher et al., 2002). Recurrent market segmentation to motivational criteria is often applied in cultural tourism research (Richards, 2018) and used to identify tourism markets of special interest (Robinson & Novelli, 2005).

#### 4.3.3.1 Previous literature

Several theoretical and empirical contributions on campus-based tourism point directly or indirectly to motivations for tourists to visit universities’ cultural assets.

Mangi et al. (2019) analysed the motivations of external individuals (results do not differentiate between tourists and local community) to visit the University of Tsinghua (China). Sixty percent (60%) of respondents wanted to visit historical sites of interest; 53% visited the campus to raise their children’s awareness of education; 50% sought interaction with the academic community; 48% sought to enjoy the campus beauty; and 30% were participating in activities, namely sport activities (15%).

The results of research into Chinese tourism demand for the University of Sydney showed that 53% of the independent Chinese tourists visited the university to see the Quad and the *Harry Potter Building*, 26% to visit friends or relatives who study there and/or because they have prospective students in their family, and 21% with educational motivations. Only 8% of visitors motivated to visit the university because of the *Harry Potter Building* were over the age of 30. Most respondents had multiple motivations to visit the university (McManus et al., 2021).

A popular motivation for visiting universities is to see buildings with great historical and/or architectural value (Gumprecht, 2007; Jaunis et al., 2021; Mangi et al., 2019; McManus et al., 2021; Woodward & Carnegie, 2020). Having contact with university heritage<sup>4</sup> in a broader sense is also referred to as a motivation (McManus et al., 2021; Woodward, 2013).

In the case of university campuses with green spaces (botanical gardens, campus outdoors, and others), it is common for tourists and local residents to visit the campus to enjoy the natural and mixed aesthetic landscapes (Jaunis et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Mangi et al., 2019; McManus et al., 2021; Shammi et al., 2020). These spaces provide a relaxing environment for tourists and are often open and free of charge (McManus et al., 2021).

Familiarisation visits for prospective students (McManus et al., 2021; Woodward, 2013) and family visits to increase children’s educational awareness (Li et al., 2021; Mangi et al., 2019) are major motivational factors for visiting universities. For example, university campuses are one of the most popular destinations for Chinese families to travel to during the summer holidays (Li et al., 2021). Open days for prospective students are particularly expressive in USA universities (Woodward, 2013). In fact, this niche market is the focus of online tourism promotion on most institutional websites of USA universities.

A considerable proportion of cultural tourists, including those visiting universities, are motivated by the opportunity to learn. Jaunis et al. (2021, p. 154) assume that campus-based tourism allows people to satisfy their *intellectual desire*. As noted earlier, 21% of respondents to the McManus et al. (2021) survey visited the University of Sydney for educational purposes. Connell (2000) further acknowledges that tourists can achieve this objective through guided tours to the university and its cultural assets (museum collections, historic buildings, science centres and others) or through activity-based experiences focused on specific skills (notably language courses).

The connection between certain universities and popular movies, TV shows, books or other types of pop culture, constitutes a strong motivation for some tourists to visit (Albino, 2015; McManus et al., 2021; Woodward, 2013). Some universities, used as film locations, are structuring tourism products around films and TV shows. For example, there are *Harry Potter* and *Alice in the Wonderland* thematic guided tours to the University of Oxford (Biggar Economics, 2017). In fact, the *Harry Potter* saga is inciting visits to several universities without a direct relation to the saga: one of the main motivations for Chinese tourists to visit the University of Sydney is to see the *Harry Potter Building*, which has an architecture similar to the movies but was not a film location (McManus et al., 2021).

In addition to the imaginary associated with pop culture, the relationship of universities to specific prominent figures is a motivational factor for people to visit these institutions. For example, the life of Thomas Jefferson and his vision for the design of the University of Virginia (USA) are major topics of the guided tours to the university (Woodward & Carnegie, 2020); ETH Zurich (Switzerland) offers an Albert Einstein audio guide to the university.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Council of Europe defines university heritage as “all tangible and intangible heritage related to higher education institutions, bodies and systems as well as to the academic community of scholars and students, and the social and cultural environment of which this heritage is a part.” (Council of Europe, 2005, paragraph 5).

The reputation of some higher education institutions is also a motivation for their visit *per se*. On this issue, for example, one respondent to the McManus et al. (2021) survey admitted enjoying visiting famous universities.

Some tourists, especially those who have not attended higher education courses, may be motivated by the opportunity to experience the university ambience (Li et al., 2021) and/or to access an (elite) institution/space that otherwise they would not be able to (Woodward & Carnegie, 2020). On the contrary, some tourists visit universities with a nostalgic motivation to remember and relive their time as university students (Li et al., 2021). Alumni are propense to return to their former universities and respective towns for nostalgic reasons, to show the institution to friends and family, for university reunions and to visit friends and relatives (VFR), and to enjoy particularities of the university and town destination(s) such as nightclubs, sport events, and entertainment options (Schofield & Fallon, 2012). Still regarding affective motivations, it is common for tourists who are VFRs to visit the universities where these individuals study/work, particularly in the case of international students (McManus et al., 2021; Michael et al., 2004).

The academic environment itself attracts visitors to universities, as evidenced by the fact that 50% of respondents of the survey to the Tsinghua University's visitors desire to interact with the academic community during their visit (Mangi et al., 2019). Also on this topic, Albino (2009) stated that tourists are particularly attracted to visit universities due to specific academic events and traditions, such as Queima das Fitas (a week-long graduation ritual at the University of Coimbra).

The eclectic events agenda of these institutions is therefore related to various motivations for visiting universities (Jaunis et al., 2021; Mangi et al., 2019). As referred previously, tourists travel to university destinations to engage in traditional academic events (Albino, 2009), particularly graduation ceremonies (Schofield & Fallon, 2012). Sport events are also a relevant factor for visiting universities (Albino, 2009; Gumprecht, 2007; Mangi et al., 2019; Schofield & Fallon, 2012; Woodward, 2013). Specifically in the USA, university games have the capacity to attract over 100,000 spectators in some cases (Woodward, 2013). Alumni are particularly motivated to visit their former university due to sport events (Schofield & Fallon, 2012; Woodward, 2013). Tourists and the local community also visit universities to attend cultural events such as art exhibitions, music concerts, and others (Albino, 2009; Gumprecht, 2007; Mangi et al., 2019).

#### **4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Cultural tourism in universities (or campus-based tourism) is growing considerably as a cultural tourism niche (Connell, 2000; Li et al., 2021; Mangi et al., 2019), and this increase should be followed by a knowledge-based management (Mangi et al., 2019) that benefits from a solid scientific literature on the subject.

The aim of this exploratory research was to identify the publics, key markets (nationalities) and common socio-demographic characteristics and motivations of tourists visiting universities by collecting secondary data and analysing previous case studies. However, more than concrete results, this paper has demonstrated the lack of empirical research on university demand of campus-based tourism and the lack of efforts/measures by entities to collect data about their

visitors/publics, which means that there is a profound gap in terms of knowledge about the demand for cultural tourism from universities. Nonetheless, the data collected and presented in this research allowed us to draw some general considerations about the demand for university-related cultural attractions.

Most university attractions collect data on the number of visitors they receive. A restricted group of Western European universities (namely from English-speaking countries) concentrate the highest visitor volumes (over 200,000 visitors/year). Previous literature shows that Asian universities also attract similar amounts of visitors to these European institutions (e.g., Mangi et al., 2019; McManus et al., 2021). Attractions with less than 10,000 visitors per year are mainly museum collections with very specific themes.

Based on the three main missions of universities – teaching, research, and knowledge transfer - it was possible to identify different publics of university tourist attractions: internal community, local community, school visitors, day-trippers and tourists (international and national). Few university attractions collect data on visitors who are part of the internal academic community. Still, certain attractions are teaching and/or research collections and are therefore aimed at (and sometimes only open to) this audience. Despite the lack of differentiation between the local community and other external visitors (day-trippers and tourists) in the data collected by entities, the local community is identified as the main and/or targeted public at some university attractions (e.g., Science Gallery Dublin (TCD, Ireland)). Probably because there is more facility to collect data on group tours, school groups are the audience on which most entities provided information. Visitors in school groups represent more than 10% of visitors at most attractions that provided information on this element and are a relevant audience to consider in strategic measures.

Finally, some information was provided on national and international tourists. As with the volume of visitors, only a few European universities are able to attract a considerable percentage of international tourists. This may be related to the central location of these institutions, their seniority and reputation (McManus et al., 2021). Currently, most universities attract mainly domestic tourist flows. In fact, university campuses are one of the most famous domestic tourism destinations in China. Only a few entities and previous literature advanced with information about visitors' nationalities. In general, the Chinese market seems to be a strategic market in campus-based tourism; therefore, it is suggested that university tourism managers should consider this market in their management and marketing strategies. Furthermore, geographical, and cultural proximity markets are statistically relevant in university attractions. Considering the results, some attention should be paid to the English, American, German, Japanese and Canadian markets in further academic and institutional studies.

In terms of socio-demographic data, the results suggest that university visitors are highly educated. In terms of age, individuals aged over 60 appear to be less motivated to visit universities, although the survey conducted by Rocha at the University of Coimbra (2019) contradicts this trend. Moreover, a considerable number of university visitors travel with family (namely with children).

Several academics present motivations for visiting universities, but further empirical research is needed to establish the relevance and differentiation of these motivations for general university visits and visits to specific institutions. It would also be relevant to understand

whether tourists visit these attractions with general cultural motivations or with motivations specifically related to universities.

It is interesting to note that different attractions at the same university receive and target different publics. For instance, 86.8% of visitors to the Old Library are international and the main audience of the Dublin Science Gallery is the local community; both are assets of Trinity College Dublin (Ireland). In fact, Jaunis et al. (2021) recommend universities and their attractions to target different publics; and also not to discard efforts to attract domestic tourists as international flows are more unstable (Universiti Malaysia Sabah, being heavily dependent of international visitors, had 99.3% less tourism revenue in 2020 than in 2019, due to the Covid-19 pandemic). As universities attract publics with different needs and specificities, it is important for these entities to create strategies, activities and interpretation efforts that align with each public they (want to) attract.

Knowing the characteristics of their tourist demand enable entities to develop more assertive strategies for their public(s). For instance, the universities of Coimbra (Portugal) and Tartu (Estonia) provide information and guided tours in the language of most of their main markets. Entities are therefore recommended to conduct periodical audience surveys so that they can adjust their offer to the needs of the public(s). Furthermore, universities are recommended to undertake surveys to examine the level of knowledge and usufruct of their tourist/cultural attractions by the internal community.

In future investigations, researchers should consider to cross indicators, given that McManus et al. (2021) concluded that tourists of different ages have different behaviours and motivations, and that tourists of different nationalities may have specific motivations for visiting certain universities (as with Israeli visitors to the University of Coimbra). Furthermore, future research should compare tourism demand from various universities using the same methodology and measurement instruments, to facilitate comparison and generalisation of results.

The reduced number of collaborating entities and the variety of data collection methodologies adopted by them make it difficult to generalise the research findings and therefore represent the main limitations of the research.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This research received support from the Centre of Studies in Geography and Spatial Planning (CEGOT), funded by national funds through the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) under the reference UIDB/04084/2020. Inês Almeida is a recipient of an Individual Doctoral Fellowship funded by national funds through FCT, under the reference 2021.06294.BD.

We also acknowledge all entities that provided information and collaborated with this research.

## REFERENCES

- Albino, S. (2009). University tourism. In J. M. Simões & C. C. Ferreira (Eds.), *Turismo de nicho: motivações, produtos, territórios* (pp. 221–232). Centro de Estudos Geográficos - Universidade de Lisboa.
- Albino, S. (2015). *Tourism in University Cities . The Role of Universities in Place Branding*. University of Exeter.
- ALVA - Association of Leading Visitor Attractions. 2019 Visitor Figures. Retrieved from <https://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=610>. Accessed in January 23, 2022.
- Biggar Economics. (2017). *Economic Impact of the University of Oxford*. Biggar Economics.
- Castillo-Manzano, J. I., Castro-Nuño, M., Lopez-Valpuesta, L., & Zarzoso, Á. (2021). Assessing the tourism attractiveness of World Heritage Sites: The case of Spain. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 48, 305–311. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2020.12.005>
- Cavaco, C., & Simões, J. (2009). Turismos de nicho: uma introdução. In J. M. Simões & C. C. Ferreira (Eds.), *Turismos de Nicho: motivações, produtos, territórios* (pp. 15–39). Centro de Estudos Geográficos - Universidade de Lisboa.
- Cheng, D., Gao, C., Shao, T., & Iqbal, J. (2020). A landscape study of sichuan university (Wangjiang campus) from the perspective of campus tourism. *Land*, 9(12), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land9120499>
- Compagnucci, L., & Spigarelli, F. (2020). The Third Mission of the university: A systematic literature review on potentials and constraints. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120284>
- Connell, J. (2000). The role of tourism in the socially responsible University. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 3(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500008667863>
- Connell, J. (1996). A study of tourism on university campus sites. *Tourism Management*, 17(7), 541–544. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(96\)89217-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(96)89217-X)
- Council of Europe (2005). *Recommendation Rec(2005)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the governance and management of university heritage*.
- Csapó, J. (2012). The Role and Importance of Cultural Tourism in Modern Tourism Industry. In M. Kasimoglu, *Strategies for Tourism Industry - Micro and Macro Perspectives* (pp. 201–232). Intechopen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/38693>
- Delloite. (2019). *Turismo Centro de Portugal: Plano de Marketing 2020-2030*.
- Dolnicar, S. (2008). Market Segmentation in Tourism. In A. G. Woodside, & D. Martin (eds.), *Tourism Management: Analysis, Behaviour, and Strategy* (pp. 129-150). CABI.
- Du Cros, H., & McKercher, B. (2015). *Cultural Tourism, Second Edition*. Routledge.
- Gumprecht, B. (2007). The campus as a public space in the American college town. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33(1), 72–103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2005.12.001>
- Jaunis, O., Amin, S., Rashid, R., & Musa, F. (2021). Scenario of campus tourism in Universiti Malaysia Sabah during the Covid-19 pandemic shutdown. *Proceedings of the TOURIST 3rd International Conference “Sustainable Tourism: Building Resilience in Uncertain*

*Time*”, (pp. 152–165).

- Kosiewicz, J. (2014). Scientific Tourism, Aspects, Religious and Ethics Values. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research*, 62(1), 83–93.
- Kozak, Z. R. (2007). *Promoting the past, preserving the future: British university heritage collections and identity marketing*. University of St. Andrews. <http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/408>
- Li, Z., Yang, K., Huang, X., Kladov, V., & Cui, R. (2021). Attractions of campus tourism experience by “shared dormitory” in China using online reviews. *Anatolia*, 00(00), 1–11.
- Mangi, M. Y., Yue, Z., & Kalwar, S. (2019). Universities emerging as tourism sites in China: A case study of Tsinghua university Beijing. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 5(1).
- McKercher, B., Ho, P. S. Y., Cros, H. Du, & So-Ming, B. C. (2002). Activities-based segmentation of the cultural tourism market. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 12(1), 23–46. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J073v12n01\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J073v12n01_02)
- McManus, P., Connell, J., & Ding, X. (2021). Chinese tourists at the University of Sydney: constraints to co-creating campus tourism? *Current Issues in Tourism*, 1–11.
- Michael, I., Armstrong, A., & King, B. (2004). The travel behaviour of international students: The relationship between studying abroad and their choice of tourist destinations. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10(1), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135676670301000106>
- Moreira, C. M., Santos, N., & Silveira, L. (2020). O turismo na cidade de Coimbra após a inscrição do Bem Universidade de Coimbra - Alta e Sofia na lista do Património Mundial UNESCO. In C. H. Henriques, M. C. Moreira, P. de A. Bittencourt César, & V. B. M. Herédia (Eds.), *Turismo e História: Perspectivas sobre o Patrimônio da Humanidade no Espaço Ibero-Americano*. EDUCS. <https://doi.org/10.18226/9786551080128>
- Oxford Economics. (2017). *The economic impact of UK Universities in 2014-15*. Oxford Economics.
- Paiva, O. (2016). *Autenticidade e Centros Históricos Património Mundial: Contributo para explicar a redundância - uma abordagem multigrupos*. Universidade de Coimbra.
- Perkin, H. (2007). History of Universities. In J. Forest & P. G. Altbach (Eds.), *International Handbook of Higher Education*, (pp. 159–205). Springer.
- Prentice, R. (1993). *Tourism and heritage attractions*. Routledge.
- Richards, G. (2018). Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, 12–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2018.03.005>
- Robinson, M., & Novelli, M. (2005). Niche tourism: an introduction. In M. Novelli, *Niche tourism: contemporary issues, trends and cases*, (pp. 1–11). Elsevier.
- Rocha, M. (2019). *Marketing e Comunicação numa atração de turismo cultural: Um plano de Marketing para o Turismo da Universidade de Coimbra*. Escola Superior de Educação de Coimbra. <http://hdl.handle.net/10400.26/31371>
- Rose, M., Rose, G. M., & Merchant, A. (2017). Is old gold? How heritage “sells” the university to prospective students: The impact of a measure of brand heritage on attitudes toward the

- university. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 57(3), 335–351. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2017-038>
- Sabah Tourism. (2020). *Sabah: Visitors arrival by nationality 2019*. <https://www.sabahtourism.com/assets/uploads/visitor-2018.pdf>
- Santos, N., Moreira, C. O., & Silveira, L. (2018). Turismo genealógico em Coimbra. Diversificação da oferta turística e qualificação territorial: Proposta de uma rota da cultura judaica. *Pluris 2018 Cidades e Territórios, Desenvolvimento, Atratividade e Novos Desafios - 8.o Congresso Luso-Brasileiro Para o Planeamento Urbano, Regional, Integrado e Sustentável*. [https://www.academia.edu/download/58259455/Turismo\\_Genealogico.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/58259455/Turismo_Genealogico.pdf)
- Schofield, P., & Fallon, P. (2012). Assessing the viability of university alumni as a repeat visitor market. *Tourism Management*, 33(6), 1373–1384. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.12.021>
- Shammi, M., Mahin, M., & Rahman, M. (2020). Assessment of Tourist Profile and Tourism Carrying Capacity of Jahangirnagar University Campus. *Jahangirnagar University Environmental Bulletin*, 7, 1–12.
- Shull, C. D. (2011). Learn About and Visit Historic College and University Campuses Using the National Park Service Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary Series. *Planning for Higher Education*, 39(3), 209–218.
- Silva, S., & Carvalho, P. (2017). On the UNESCO World Heritage route. Characteristics and behaviours of visitors to the University of Coimbra 's Botanical Garden. *Local Identity and Tourism Management on World Heritage Sites. Trends and Challenges. Conference Proceedings*, 39–56.
- Smith, M. K. (2003). Reconceptualising cultural tourism. In M. Smith (ed.). *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies* (pp. 30-44). Routledge.
- Tomasi, S., Paviotti, G., & Cavicchi, A. (2020). Educational tourism and local development: The role of universities. *Sustainability*, 12(17). <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU12176766>
- Tourism of Ireland. (2020). *Island of Ireland - Overseas Tourism Performance: 2019 Facts & Figures*. [https://www.tourismireland.com/TourismIreland/media/Tourism-Ireland/Research/TI\\_FactsandFigures\\_2019.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.tourismireland.com/TourismIreland/media/Tourism-Ireland/Research/TI_FactsandFigures_2019.pdf?ext=.pdf)
- UNWTO. (2019). UNWTO Tourism Definitions. In *UNWTO Tourism Definitions*. UNWTO. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858>
- Visitory. Uppsala - Accommodation and Travel Stats - visitory. Retrieved from <https://visitory.io/en/upsala/2019-01/2019-12/>. Accessed on January 24, 2022.
- Woodward, S. (2013). Campus tourism, universities and destination development. In M. Smith & G. Richards (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Tourism* (pp. 265–272). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203120958>
- Woodward, S. C., & Carnegie, E. (2020). Student Guides as Mediators of Institutional Heritage and Personal Experience. In G. Yildirim, O. Ozbek, C. Kilinc, & A. Tarinc (Ed.), *Cases on Tour Guide Practices for Alternative Tourism* (pp. 55-73). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-3725-1.ch004>