DARK TOURISM: THE CASE OF LA MODELO OF BARCELONA (SPAIN)

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Abstract:

The phenomenon of visits to the territory for knowledge or recognition, especially focused on memorial sites, is gaining prominence in the tourism sector, which translates into the emergence of numerous companies that market products focused on memorial sites dedicated to local citizens and, increasingly, to other profiles. The baby boomer generation is a consumer of this type of products and services. This research, a case study, analyses the former Barcelona La Modelo prison, as a local resource and as an example of a new trend in tourism: dark tourism. Using quantitative techniques (survey) and qualitative techniques (in-depth interviews), it is observed that La Modelo is known thanks to friends or family, that visits prioritise interest in history or memory and are valued more if they are guided, and that the signage and information are satisfactory. It is concluded that the majority of visitors (guided or independent) admitted that the visit had helped them to change their view of prisons and the inmate population.

Keywords: dark tourism, knowledge tourism, recognition tourism, memory tourism, La Modelo.

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Resumen:

El fenómeno de las visitas de conocimiento o reconocimiento del territorio, centradas especialmente en espacios de la memoria, está adquiriendo protagonismo en el ámbito turístico, lo que se traduce en el surgimiento de numerosas empresas que comercializan productos centrados en los espacios de la memoria dedicados a la ciudadanía de proximidad y, cada vez más, a otros perfiles. La generación baby boomer es consumidora de este tipo de

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productos y servicios. Esta investigación, un estudio de caso, analiza la antigua cárcel Modelo de Barcelona, como recurso local y como ejemplo de una nueva tendencia en turismo. A partir de técnicas cuantitativa (encuesta) y cualitativa (entrevistas en profundidad), se observa que se conoce La Modelo gracias a amistades o familiares, que las visitas priorizan el interés por la historia o por la memoria y se valoran más si son guiadas, y que la señalética y la información son satisfactorias. Se concluye que la mayoría de visitantes (de forma guiada o por libre) admitieron que la visita les había servido para modificar la visión de las cárceles y de la población reclusa.

Palabras clave: dark tourism, turismo de conocimiento, turismo de reconocimiento, turismo de la memoria, La Modelo

1. INTRODUCTION

For several decades, the importance of understanding one's own territory, especially in urban areas, has led to an extraordinary growth in companies dedicated to this. This has only increased since the pandemic, and over time, they have consolidated significantly.

A tourist destination like the city of Barcelona is an ideal axis of analysis along this path, perfectly applicable to any other urban area. This study focuses on the value tourists place on visits to the Modelo building, which was a former penitentiary center with a history closely related to its period of creation, especially during the Franco regime. This is a resource related to the importance of historical memory.

Specifically, there is an extensive bibliography on the study of tourism based on historical memory, which has attempted to differentiate it from the concept of dark tourism. This includes aspects linked to morbidity, beyond the complexity of the concept. Although attempts have been made to generate products and companies focused on this approach, the goal is to clearly differentiate memory tourism as an act of historical remembrance and also of appreciation and recognition of the territory and its more recent past.

What is of interest is precisely the most recent memory, since events dating back much further, no matter how interesting they may be, can overwhelm the possibilities of tourism marketing. Tourism for knowledge of the territory and urban areas encompasses more elements and resources related to more recent history; therefore, it must be implemented not only in a physical sense, but also in a historical sense.

The study of knowledge of the territory, not only by people who live elsewhere (tourists), but also by citizens who reside in that same area, has driven the flourishing of companies dedicated to creating and managing related services in recent decades. This knowledge of the territory has developed especially in urban areas, precisely because they have a wealth of resources and because it has become a key element in what we call memory tourism. The user profile for this type of tourism is concentrated among seniors, especially the baby boom generation, which is very populous and entering retirement by cohort. This implies more free time, a solid economic situation, and a very dynamic profile, with higher education and an interest in culture. This target audience increases interest in this type of product.

Furthermore, destinations associated with memory are not only interesting for local residents. Sociodemographically, virtual nomads have multiple homes, change workplaces, or work remotely, giving them free time and becoming a target audience for memory tourism, which can boost repeat visits, associated with heritage attractions and resources previously unavailable to the public and becoming a more cultural tourism option.

Memory tourism was initially framed within dark tourism. The term "dark tourism" encompasses various tourism services and products related to death and disasters (Calderón, 2020; Carrasco, Padilla, & Melgar, 2015). Others define it as a subcategory within tourism activities focused on exploring heritage sites with a traumatic burden: grief, pain, death, or morbidity (González Vázquez, 2021).

Many studies tend to confirm that the first categorization of dark tourism took place in the mid-1990s (Light, 2017), when Foley and Lennon (1996b: 198) defined it as the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified sites of death and disasters. Subsequently, contributions have continued to incorporate new elements into the classification of dark tourism. Thus, Stone (2005, 2006) collaborates in this process, stating that dark tourism refers to visits, intentional or not, to sites with or without purpose, which offer a presentation of death or suffering as the reason for being (Stone, 2005) or that represents the "act of travel to tourist sites associated with death, suffering or the seemingly macabre" (Stone, 2006: 146). Similarly, Tarlow (2005) identifies the concept with visiting places where historically notable tragedies or deaths occur and that continue to impact our lives. It will be Lennon and Foley (2000) who will strengthen the model that they conceptualized by presenting cases from different places and that, according to González Vázquez and Mundet (2018), is considered to be a reference to this day.

Thus, initially, any tourist activity related to darkness, death, or disaster was included within the so-called dark tourism. Gradually, what would be considered dark tourism (visiting places associated with crimes or disasters) has been differentiated from others such as thanatourism (understood essentially as a visit to a cemetery) (Hartman, 2014; Johnston, 2011; Seaton, 2009a; Foley and Lennon, 1996), which is separate from it since cemeteries were visited for different reasons, either to visit the tombs of famous or cult figures, such as the tomb of Edgar Allan Poe (Three Roses and a Cognac) or the King of Rock in Memphis. Other times, cemeteries are visited because they are a cultural expression of death in a way distinct from Western culture, such as the Chichicastenango cemetery or the curious happy cemetery of Sapanta in Romania. Cemeteries are part of our tangible heritage, both for their constructions and for their sculptures, engravings, and layout. Furthermore, they are part of our intangible heritage and our anthropological reality, and they capture the way we understand death, along with the customs and traditions associated with it. For this reason, in 2010, the Council of Europe certified the Route of the Cemeteries of Europe.

Dark tourism's relationship with death led to the connection with other types of resources or products that are actually more characteristic of Memory Tourism. Thus, Stone (2006) himself establishes different typologies: Dark fun factories (sites for visitors, predominantly focused on entertainment and with a commercial ethic, and which present real or fictional death and macabre events); Dark exhibitions (products that revolve around death, suffering, or the macabre, often with a reflective, commemorative, and educational character); Dark dungeons (dungeons and, therefore, former prisons or courtrooms); Dark Resting Places (cemeteries); Dark Shrines (dark sanctuaries, often media-friendly and ephemeral); Dark Conflict Sites (battlefields); and Dark Camps of Genocide (genocide camps from the Third Reich to Rwanda, Cambodia, or Kosovo).

Light (2017), in his review of the literature on dark tourism and thanatourism, also mentions subforms. Along with the development of typologies, attempts have been made to identify subforms of dark tourism, including "penal/prison tourism" (Strange and Kempa, 2003; Aslan, 2015); "fear tourism" (Bristow and Newman, 2005); "genocide tourism" (Haya, 2009; Dunkley et al., 2007); "grief tourism" (Dunkley et al., 2007); "disaster tourism"

(Robbie, 2008); "favela tourism" (Robb, 2009); "pagan tourism" (Leyes, 2013); "suicide tourism" (Miller and González Vázquez, 2013); "atomic tourism" (Freeman, 2014); "conflict heritage tourism" (Mansfeld and Korman, 2015); and "dystopian dark tourism" (Podoshen, Venkatesh, et al., 2015). Other closely related forms of niche tourism include "poverty tourism" (Rolfes, 2010; see also Carrigan, 2014) and "gothic tourism" (McEvoy, 2016).

Rami and Erdinç (2013) analyze how, despite the extensive existing theorization on the concept of dark tourism, there are very few studies on the motivations that lead tourists to visit these places. As Ashworth (2012) comments, the motivations that attract tourists to these places depend on various factors, such as the authenticity of the place, the discourse offered, the intentionality or even the level of tourist infrastructure it has. Seaton (1996) considers that the main motivation of dark tourism is the real or symbolic desire to encounter death, while Rami and Erdinç (2013) believe that not all tourists who visit places associated with death and suffering are looking for a dark experience. Rami and Erdinç (2013 in Austin, 2002, Slade 2003; Seaton and Lennon, 2004; Logan and Reeves, 2009) present the motivation within the ideological and political spheres, as a spiritual experience, as a memory, as a grieving process, as a demonstration of national identity, or even as an educational experience, or simply by chance.

One of the most notable modalities is what has been called memory tourism, a term coined specifically (in the field of cultural tourism) by Pierre Nora (1984), who was responsible for theorizing about *lieux de mémoire*. Based on their unique approach to the study of places of memory, we understand that, in the words of González Vázquez and Mundet (2018), "a space emanating from collective memory is something much deeper and more reflective than a simple physical space. Thus, a place of memory can be not only a geographical element but also a smell, a song, a flag, or anything else through which a given collective might feel its memory challenged" (González Vázquez and Mundet, 2018: 108).

González (2016), following Mantei (2012), establishes various spaces of memory:

- Testimony spaces: places where the events that have transformed them into spaces of memory have directly occurred;
- Commemorative spaces: Places dedicated to tribute and remembrance;
- Informative and educational spaces: places dedicated to dissemination from a particular perspective, where memorial dissemination includes elements of interpretation.

Most authors (Da Silva and Bougon, 2013; Piernas, 2014; González Vázquez and Mundet, 2018; Bidon and Huber, 2019) indicate that the origin of memory tourism occurred in France after the First World War, when the most significant spaces of many of the battles became places of pilgrimage in an archaic way, anticipating what we find today. Thus, battlefields represent the beginning of memory tourism, and war-related tourist attractions are the best-known category (Smith, 1998). Although the First World War can be consensually considered the true turning point in the boom in tourism to war sites, there is an earlier precedent: the Battle of Waterloo, which, according to Seaton (1996, 1999), is the first major tourist-oriented battle in history, given that it not only generated tourist flows afterwards, but also attracted numerous visitors during and before the battle. This issue cannot be compared with the present, not only because of the marketing and dissemination media, but above all because of its intentionality, as it was an exaltation of British imperialism, far removed from current civic reflection.

Regarding this point, civic reflection on the past, almost all authors mention ethical problems (Carrasco, Padilla, and Melgar, 2015; Lennon, 2017; Martini and Buda, 2018; Calderón, 2020). On the one hand, there is the need to disseminate and the need to transmit, but on the other, there is the problem of transmission and ethics. The need to transmit seeks to reach a broad and varied audience (González Vázquez and Mundet, 2018). Tourism has often been associated with the banal commercialization of spaces; in contrast, tourism can be understood as a journey of knowledge or as a golden horde (paraphrasing Ash and Turner's 1991 work). Similarly, museums, considered temples of culture, are visited by many people with diverse interests and motivations. Sometimes, it is not tourism that trivializes, but rather people who trivialize.

1.1. Trivialization of tourism.

The main obstacle facing the patrimonialization of memory is that of the uncomfortable past. There is no single narrative or discourse to convey, but rather a plurality of points of view and ways of understanding the events. The problem is even more profound if the memory is of a painful, traumatic, or conflict-ridden past, and even more so if it is recent, as these remain latent in society (Navajas and González, 2017). According to AsIan (2015), a moral and ethical dilemma also arises, as it involves the commercial exploitation of the tragic history of a place.

Strange and Kempa (2003) consider spaces such as historic prisons to be a heritage product with a highly emotional and political charge, and become resources that are easy to market but difficult to interpret.

According to Hernández and Rojo-Ariza (2011), the musealization of conflict-ridden spaces is normalized in Europe. The two world wars have been reflected upon, studied, recognized, and musealized, and this demonstrates the democratic maturity of states.

Another problem encountered in the patrimonialization of memory is the manipulation of the narrative. According to Lennon and Tiberghien (2021), when the past is uncomfortable, there is a social and political tendency to try to hide it or explain it in an ambiguous or partial way. It is often even preferable for it to remain forgotten. Lawther, Kilean, and Dempster (2021) argue that the very landscapes and places of tragic pasts that are intended to be made visible always undergo a prior selection of political convenience regarding what is and is not to be shown while defining the discourse and narrative. A similar argument is made by Strange and Kempa (2003), who comment that the representation and visibility of the dark elements of the history of places are shaped and reconfigured by the political, cultural, and economic forces of each location. The prevailing perspective is that of States commemorating suffering, battles won, and heroes fallen.

Several authors agree that the patrimonialization and touristification of memorial spaces can end up turning them into theme parks and trivializing the past they recreate. Navajas and González Vázquez (2017) argue that the reason for this trivialization is mass tourism and the manipulation of these spaces to adapt them to visitors. From the same perspective, Strange and Kempa (2003) detect that tourism is perhaps the inappropriate and even immoral vehicle for presenting human suffering or traumatic events. The commodification of history as mass consumption can lead to a trivialization of the events that occurred, although they also agree that it is a way of presenting injustice. According to González Vázquez (2016), tourism may be the cause of the trivialization of historical memory when economic development for tourism is prioritized over the function of memorial dissemination. On the contrary, however, Memory Tourism is also considered a type of tourism that cannot fall into trivialization, as by

definition it is a concept linked to the duty of remembrance, in which the development and dissemination of memory are two closely related values that should not be understood without each other.

On the other hand, it is considered that tourism and memory must always be under review to avoid falling into trivialization. The past must be remembered so that it is not repeated, but the aestheticization of horror must be avoided because it can lead to the trivialization of memory. Another element that can lead to the trivialization of historical memory is, according to González Vázquez and Mundet (2018), the manipulation of the museum display or elements displayed in the space. These are often manipulated, reconfiguring the past for our current vision, and this strips it of all its true value. Neuraska (2013) believes that a failure to present evidence in a reliable and careful manner, and that manipulation of evidence can create confusion, distort its history, and even fuel denialist theories.

González Vázquez (2016) believes that a successful implementation of Memory Tourism requires a sound museographic strategy and careful interpretation. If this process is carried out correctly and the visitor is successfully engaged and a product with a solid narrative is constructed, it will be possible to avoid the trivialization that comes with tourism. Remembrance is seen as the opposite of forgetting and the main reason for promoting the recovery of historical memory. Furthermore, the relationship between tourism and memory is interpreted: the former is the main cause of the trivialization of the latter. In fact, the economic growth of some cities is related to the expansion of the memory of the territory.

Memory tourism plays two roles: that of the past and that of the future. According to Vázquez (2016), the past refers to situations in which a place or space has suffered tragic events that affected the society of that time. Regarding the future, communities take the necessary measures to strengthen memory spaces and thus remember the events in the present, raising awareness of their seriousness.

Ortiz and Martínez (2014) reflect on the heritage importance of historical sites associated with repressive functions such as prisons, concentration camps, or internment camps. They believe they should be considered Memory Spaces, since they are a reference to a history of domination, exploitation, and abuse, and are therefore important spaces for individual and collective memory of our recent past. Strange and Dempa (2003) argue along the same lines when they state that visiting these spaces can become an emotional experience for the visitor, but can also be an opportunity for spiritual and political reflection. They believe that prisons should be preserved as a testament to the achievements of the old regimes. They should be kept open and shown to tourists as places of interpretation of imprisonment, punishment, repression, resistance, forced isolation, humiliation, but also dignity.

With the intention of offering an educational—and at the same time recreational—experience, old prisons have been transformed into visitable spaces. This development has become part of a broader phenomenon known as penal tourism. Indeed, from medieval dungeons to other more developed institutions, they arouse an eternal curiosity and fascination with the imposition of punishment (Welch, 2012; 2013; Brown, 2009), while others consider the novelty of visiting those spaces traditionally closed to the public (Swensen, 2011). According to Ortiz and Martínez (2014), the motivation for which some institutions decide to convert or redefine old historical prisons into spaces with social functions is to try to give a second chance, delivering kindness.

Prison tourism exposes practices that were previously hidden behind closed doors, including the abuse, torture, and execution of prisoners, whose exhibitions aim to expose

these practices (Welch, 2012; Welch and Macuare, 2011; Wilson, 2011; Aslan, 2015). Prisons have often been witnesses to totalitarian systems: from Franco's regime in Spain, to Argentine prisons and the May Mothers of Videla's regime, to Chiang Kai Shek's White Terror (Lin, 2015). The reuse of prison spaces, while of great interest, cannot be included within prison tourism. Visitors to the Montevideo prison (where one of its galleries was converted into a Contemporary Art Space), the Ávila prison (which houses the Provincial Historical Archive), the Badajoz provincial prison (converted into the Extremadura and Ibero-American Museum of Art), or the Salamanca prison (which used one of its galleries to house the Domus Artium Art Center), as well as the former Vigo prison, which became the city's Museum of Contemporary Art (Ortiz and Martínez, 2014), do not visit old prisons but rather cultural and/or exhibition centers. Strange and Kempa (2003) analyze Alcatraz, the former prison in San Francisco, which housed common-law prisoners who had violated federal laws. It was converted into a tourist attraction and remains one of the city's main attractions today. We also find two former prisons that have followed a similar model: the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia and Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin. McCorkel and Dal Cortivo (2018) study how both prisons have been converted into tourist attractions. Through careful narrative, staging, and guided tours, the brutality of the system and the punishments to which the prisoners were subjected are shown and conveyed to the visitor. Audio recordings, letters, and photographs humanize the inmates. Many of the nationalist leaders fighting for Irish independence were imprisoned and executed in Dublin's Kilmainham Gaol. The prison museum presents these political prisoners as heroes and commemorates their deaths. A visit to this space invites visitors to reflect on how punishment is an exercise of state power.

Along the same lines, Lawther, Kilean, and Dempster (2021) present the Cambodian cases of Tuol Sleng, the Pol Pot regime's interrogation center where crimes against the state were documented and punished, and Choeung Ek, the site of the execution and burial of Tuol Sleng detainees. Both spaces were transformed into tourist attractions as a political necessity for reconciliation and to eliminate the ties between the new government of the People's Republic of Cambodia and the old regime. They are now spaces for commemoration and memorialization, as well as places of education and an important focus for international tourism.

Varillas (2018), on Mexico, analyzes the former San Juan de Ulúa prison, where the conversion of the space has turned it into a cultural and historical landmark and part of the collective memory of the place.

Ortiz and Martínez (2014) show how in Spain there are examples of prisons linked to the Civil War and the dictatorship that have been preserved and protected by heritage laws. They give us as examples the Barcelona Model Prison, which the city council included as a protected urban asset; the Valencia Model Prison, of which the dome and four gallery naves were preserved, although the General Urban Planning Plan was modified and an administrative complex of four buildings surrounding the prison was built; or the Oviedo Correctional Prison, which was declared a Site of Cultural Interest with the category of monument. Another case highlighted by Ortiz and Martínez (2014) is the former Karosta Prison in Latvia, used by the Nazis, Soviets, and Latvians until 1997. It has been converted into a theme hotel that offers visitors the chance to experience firsthand the surveillance system, mistreatment, and appalling living conditions suffered by the real prisoners. The possible virtualization of views, in the midst of cloud journalism (Fondevila-Gascón, 2010) and the Broadband Society (Fondevila-Gascón, 2013), is another approach worth considering.

According to Hernández and Rojo-Ariza (2011), the musealization of conflict spaces is normalized in Europe. The two world wars have been reflected upon, studied, recognized, and musealized, demonstrating the democratic maturity of states. The same is not true in Spain, where the civil war remains a dark subject, neither normalized nor musealized. Ortiz and Martínez (2014) present a similar view when analyzing spaces such as conflict zones, as Spain still maintains a complicated relationship with the more recent past of war and dictatorship. Memorial spaces are controversial sites, so deciding how to reproduce them and what approach to give them is complex and difficult to reach a consensus even today.

1.2. La Modelo as an open space.

La Modelo was designed to be an exemplary penitentiary center. Built on the outskirts of Barcelona in 1904, the prison occupied two blocks of the Eixample district and featured an innovative architectural design in the form of a panopticon: starting from a polygonal central body—where the guards were located—six galleries radiated out, each containing approximately 600 cells. This structure, inspired by the theses of the British jurist and philosopher Jeremy Bentham and designed by Salvador Vinyals Sabaté and Josep Domènech Estapà, allowed for exceptional surveillance and control.

Throughout the 20th century, as Barcelona grew around it, La Modelo became the place where participants in all kinds of riots were imprisoned. During the Franco regime, the cells of this prison housed thousands of political prisoners, especially in the 1940s, during the great post-war repression. The priest of La Modelo, in fact, highlighted the excessive overcrowding of the prison in 1941. Furthermore, at least 24 executions by garrote took place within its walls, which are now documented.

Construction work on La Modelo began in 1887, a year before the Barcelona World's Fair. The goal was to build a model penitentiary, following an architecture based on surveillance and control, and to improve the conditions of the inmates at Reina Amalia Prison in the Raval neighborhood.

Soon, the prison began to lose its exemplary character, and prisoner riots began. The first took place in 1906, and two years later, in 1908, the first execution took place. In 1955, La Modelo became a mixed-sex prison. The closure of the Les Corts women's prison led to the transfer of prisoners to the building on Entença Street. This period continued until July 9, 1963, when the Trinidad women's prison was inaugurated. Hundreds of women trade unionists and university students passed through La Modelo.

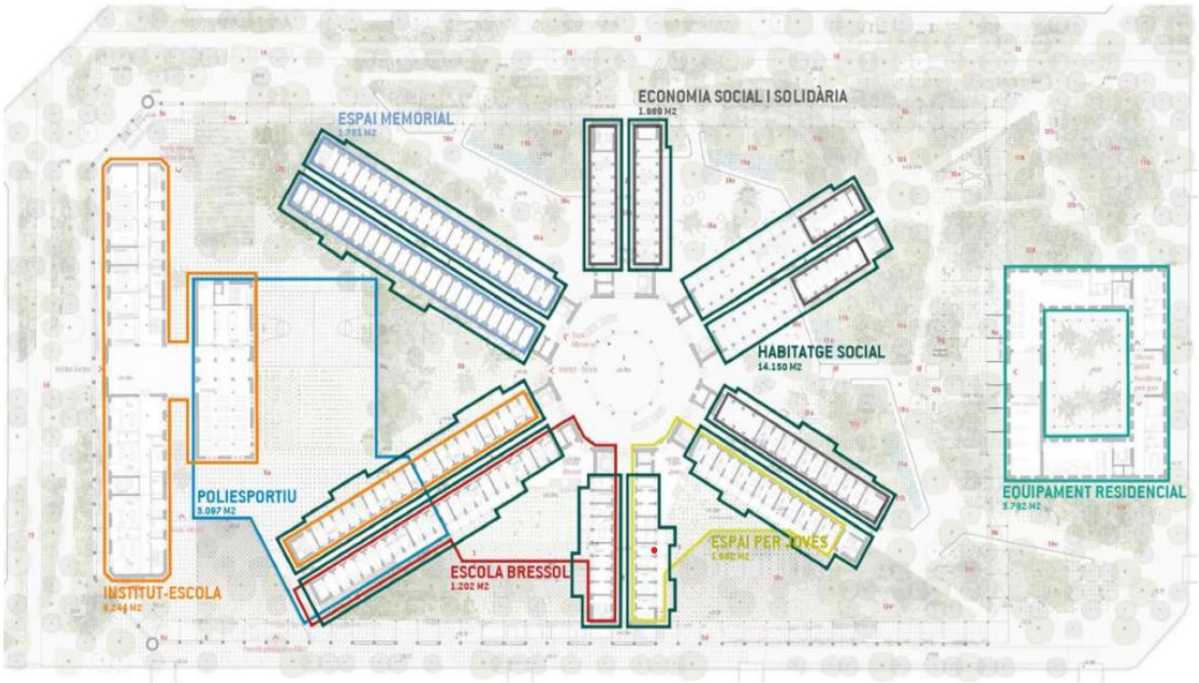
The 1976 Metropolitan General Plan already provided for the closure of La Modelo and its transformation into an urban park with facilities. However, conflict within the prison continued for years, with riots such as the one at the COPEL in 1977. Despite these events, it wasn't until 1995 that both the Parliament of Catalonia and the Barcelona City Council approved motions to close La Modelo and seek new locations for the prisons. The prison's closure was a long process that began in the 1970s with the first neighborhood protests calling for the relocation of La Modelo and the construction of facilities, but it didn't close until June 8, 2017.

In 2000, its heritage value was recognized, and the groundwork for its protection was laid. Subsequently, in 2001, urban planning changes were approved, paving the way for its definitive closure. Finally, in 2009, the Master Plan was finalized, detailing the future uses of the space, including a park, a school, a residence, and a memorial space.

Starting in 2014, ownership of the Modelo prison passed to Barcelona City Council, initiating a process of transformation. In 2017, the final agreement for the prison's closure was signed, which became effective in June of that same year, thus fulfilling a long-standing demand from residents.

Starting in 2018, the City Council assumed management of the former Modelo prison, transforming it into a space open to the community. Following a participatory process called La Model Late and the Memorial Space (2020), a new Master Plan was presented in 2019, and a competition was held to define its future. The winning proposal was ultimately selected in 2020, which calls for the creation of a large urban park and a complex of amenities and housing. The space's transformation is expected to be completed by 2032 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Spaces of La Modelo



Source: Cultural Center La Modelo, 2024

Fomento de Ciudad, commissioned by Barcelona City Council, is responsible for managing the temporary uses of the space and the promotion of activities within its facilities. A steering committee, formed by the Department of Memory of Barcelona City Council and the ICUB, under the supervision of the Department of Urban Ecology, is responsible for establishing the criteria for the content of these activities, as well as the technical requirements they must meet to be held within La Modelo.

Since then, La Modelo has hosted temporary activities such as talks, conferences, exhibitions, filming, and book presentations, as well as permanent activities such as free visits (Table 1), guided tours for the general public, and guided tours for educational centers (exclusively for Upper Primary Education, ESO, and Baccalaureate). All of these are free of charge and aim to promote, enhance, and raise awareness of the resource among citizens and visitors (Barcelona City Council, 2021).

Table 1. List of visitors and activities at La Modelo from 2018 to 2023

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of visitors (in the different types of visits)	54.712	45.609	6.138	7.780	47.218	107.984
Number of activities	67	43	25	106	-	179

Source: Cultural Center La Model

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study employed two research techniques: quantitative (survey) and qualitative (in-depth interview), which provides a holistic view by combining methodologies (Gutiérrez-Aragón, Gassiot-Melian, & Alabart-Algueró, 2021; Gassiot, Prats, & Coromina, 2016; Fondevila-Gascón & Del Olmo-Arriaga, 2013; Bericat, 1998). On the one hand, during the summer of 2024, a questionnaire was administered to 400 people. A total of 386 were valid, with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 4.98. The questions were divided into three blocks. They began with sociodemographic questions (age, sex, profession, educational level). In relation to the visit to the Model, two distinct blocks were created: one on the spaces visited, and another related to the on-site information. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 10 people who participated in the guided tour for the general public. This approach was considered appropriate, as it sought to gain a deeper understanding of the opinions of those who visited.

The profile of the typical visitor to La Modelo is female (61.9%), with an average age of 43.6 years, university education (57.0%), and a salaried employee (65.1%).

They were asked how they learned about the La Modelo tours; their motivation for visiting the space; their level of satisfaction with the visit in relation to the La Modelo signage (location, text in languages, etc.); the explanatory brochure; the guide's explanations; the spaces visited; and whether their expectations were met.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Quantitative results.

Regarding knowledge of La Modelo, as is typical for similar attractions (visits to memorial sites), 40.20% learned about it through friends and family, and 29.8% learned about it through the internet. Interestingly, 18.10% stated they learned about La Modelo through an above-the-line medium, television, given that it is not typically used for communication or advertising of this type of site. This aspect was mentioned in the interviews, and it was indicated that it was due to having watched several television programs, interviews with politicians, historians, former political prisoners, former common-law prisoners, and others on TV3 (the Catalan regional television station) for some time. Other means used to learn about the site in question were literature (4.10%) and relatives of prisoners (7.8%). Regarding the motivations for visiting La Modelo (Table 2), the interest in history or memory leads the ranking, exceeding half of the choices, ahead of cultural interest (33.2%) and architectural interest (14.2%).

Table 2. Motivations for going to La Modelo

Motivation	Percentage
Interest in history and memory	52,6%
Cultural interest	33,2%
Architectural interest	14,2%

Source: own elaboration

Those who took the guided tour for the general public were more satisfied with the visit (86%) than those who took the self-guided tour (9.7%). A similar percentage was found for the recommendation rate, but in this case the difference between the two tour formats was not significant (83.7%). A completely different picture emerged regarding the purchase of tickets. The majority of respondents stated that they had to wait more than three months to obtain tickets (97.2%). 2.3% waited just a few weeks, and only two people (0.5%) had no problems at all.

The questionnaire was broken down by type of tour. Thus, those who took the guided tour were satisfied with the guide and considered the explanation to be very appropriate, both in terms of tone and language used (84.5%). Less satisfaction was shown with the duration of the tour and when analyzing whether the tour had met expectations (76.2%). The questionnaire requested a Likert scale rating, and interestingly, no extremes of satisfaction were found (very satisfied or not at all satisfied) in any aspect of the survey.

Individuals who took the self-guided tour were asked other questions. 78% of those who took the self-guided tour stated that they chose the tour option as an alternative to a guided tour. The tour is organized around 20 monoliths distributed throughout the visitable spaces (entrance courtyard, parcel service, visitor centers, central corridor, panopticon, galleries 4 and 5, and courtyard).

Respondents were asked their degree of agreement or disagreement (Likert scale) with different statements regarding the signage, indicators, and monoliths/panels. Regarding the indicators, 98.7% agreed or strongly agreed with both the location and the information provided, and the languages used (Catalan and Spanish). Exactly the same is true of the monoliths: the vast majority rate them positively (98.7%). Only the summary monolith of the entry is the information also available in English.

Regarding the information in the brochures, the results are overwhelming: they are easy to understand (99.2%) and comprehensively cover the different topics (78.2%). However, regarding the depth of the information, the same percentage (78.2%) considers them to be too generic. No sociodemographic data (gender, age, employment status, or educational level) showed statistically significant differences.

3.2. Qualitative results.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 people: six of whom had taken the guided tour, and four who had taken the free or self-guided tour.

The interview was conducted using a basic questionnaire intended to spark a conversation with the researchers who had conducted the tour. They were asked about the spaces available for visits. The question was raised about whether it would have been appropriate to open more spaces, to which 70% responded affirmatively. They commented that they were aware that the space was limited for economic reasons, but noted that other galleries, such as the sixth, would have been of interest. Thirty percent of those interviewed knew about this gallery from recalling programs on Catalan Television and other unspecified sources. Eighty percent of

those interviewed finished the tour feeling that the space could offer much more. They were asked if they found the spaces interesting and if they were impressed by some of the most symbolic or representative spaces, such as the cells, the visiting room, the Methadone room, the figure of Puig Antich and the Vaquilla, even daily life in prison or the use of the *garrote vil* (in the case of Puig Antich). The responses revealed a significant difference between the two types of visits. Afterward, participants were allowed to comment on their impressions of the spaces.

Both the cells and the visiting rooms impressed those who took the guided tour (100%), as the guide made everyone enter the cell together and slammed the door shut. This experience did not occur during the self-guided visit. Data on the prison population was displayed. La Modelo was designed for around 600 inmates, although in 1990 it held up to 2,580, and after the Civil War in 1940, 13,000 prisoners were overcrowded. Visitors were struck by the sensation of eight people in such a small space (4 meters long x 2.4 meters wide x 3.3 meters high).

Several of those interviewed during the self-guided tour stated that there was a lack of information inside the visiting rooms. Just before entering, Monolith 4 briefly explains how prisoners communicated with their families and lawyers, but once inside, they found themselves simply surrounded by rooms. While it's not difficult to imagine what went on there, it's a thought-provoking space that warrants considering several initiatives that would improve the visitor experience.

The figure of Puig Antich was mentioned during the guided tour and impressed all those interviewed. However, during the self-guided tour, there was no information in the parcel room about Salvador Puig Antich's execution there. The monolith in the room makes no mention of it, and there is no other support or resource to explain the event or why there is a bouquet of flowers on the floor. Cell 443 in Gallery 4, where he was imprisoned, is also unmarked. Reference to this figure is found only on monolith 20, located in the courtyard, the last stop on the tour. It is considered that the reference is given at an inappropriate time and too briefly.

In the same direction, it is believed that more information is missing about the harsh and dark period of the 1980s and 1990s, when heroin and AIDS invaded the prison. As you pass Gallery 4, you pass a room with a closed door that retains the original signage reading "Methadone," but there is no panel or monolith that refers to it. Therefore, the people interviewed who took the self-guided tour were unaware of what this room was, although the name suggested it was. Guided tours explain the figure of El Vaquilla, who led a riot in the 1980s to smuggle heroin into the prison. This explains why 100% of the people interviewed who took the guided tour were impressed by this room and what it represents.

Another example highlighted by the interviewees during the free visit is the installation in the fifth gallery. Using mannequins inside three cells, the aim is to illustrate and compare the number of inmates who lived in the same space at different times. This staging is very original and breaks with what has been seen so far, and it is a very visual way of illustrating the different realities, despite being shown in whitewashed, cleaned, and perfectly preserved cells. The installation is presented in such an orderly and neat manner that it doesn't fit with the sense of real overcrowding it should convey. In a way, it is "an attempt to show a terrible event without making the viewer uncomfortable," noted one of the interviewees.

Interviewees expressed a similar perception of the cells open to visitors in galleries 4 and 5. Some are completely empty, while others retain only the bed/bunk frame, table, and stool

from the more recent period. All of them retain some of the inmates' writings and graffiti on the walls, even from more recent periods, but this is the only link that can transport the visitor to the reality of that space: "Its emptiness marks a distance." If areas such as the recreated or themed cells were presented, the visitor could become more involved in the space. This is achieved in two of the cells in Gallery 5, the library and the barbershop. Although they cannot be entered, they are recreated, and the objects and belongings are displayed as they supposedly were in reality. These cells retain the original signage above the door and do not have any monolith or panel explaining anything about the space, and they don't need it, as the recreation speaks for itself.

75% of the interviewees who had taken the self-guided tour missed more multimedia content given that, as the tours were not guided, there was much less information. One interviewee indicated that the tour had changed their view of prisons. It was included in the questionnaire, so that 60% of those interviewed (in both formats) stated that the visit had served to change their perception of prisons and the inmate population.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Memory and prison tourism represent a growing trend in the tourism sector, inviting visitors to reflect on the past and connect with places steeped in history and meaning. This type of tourism presents several characteristics and challenges that deserve analysis: On the one hand, it allows visitors to connect with the past and, at the same time, establish an emotional connection with historical events and the people who experienced them—in the case of La Modelo, with the prisoners who were incarcerated.

Furthermore, this type of visit provides educational value, as it encourages reflection on topics such as justice, freedom, human rights, and the consequences of human actions, especially during periods of historical repression. This type of tourism also encourages new uses for prisons while contributing to the preservation of historical and cultural sites, raising awareness of their importance. There is interest in so-called penal or prison tourism (Aslan, 2015), which could take advantage of digital and multimedia possibilities (Fondevila-Gascón, 2010 and 2013). However, respect for the victims must not be overlooked. Therefore, it is essential to guarantee respect for the victims, not trivialize their experiences (Strange and Kempa, 2003), and avoid gratuitous morbidity (González Vázquez, 2021). A balance must be found between heritage preservation and tourism use. No less important is the interpretation of historical events. This must be rigorous and objective, avoiding political positions. The challenges and ethical considerations posed by this type of tourism must also be addressed.

As limitations of the research, the quantitative sample could be increased to allow for inferential statistical analysis. Likewise, in the qualitative section, other profiles (technicians, guides, academics specializing in this type of tourism) could be interviewed in order to obtain a worldview on the object of study.

Future lines of research are diverse. From a geographical perspective, a comparison of perceptions based on the country or continent of origin of the tourists could shed light, and even establish possible connections or correlations with the prison tradition of each location. Likewise, longitudinal studies would add value to the management of visits to La Modelo, as they would act as a form of knowledge transfer, extendable to other comparable attractions. The application to reality is immediate in this type of approach to tourism, such as penal or prison tourism, whose growth is striking.

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