

MANAGING TOURIST EXPERIENCE IN MONTENE- GRIN MUSEUMS IN THE CON- TEXT OF EU ACCESSION

Łukasz Gawęł

Jagiellonian University

ORCID 0000-0002-0504-3750

Anna Pluszyńska

Jagiellonian University

ORCID 0000-0003-0271-5176

Jovana Janinovic

University of Montenegro

ORCID 0000-0003-0945-0633

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This article analyses management practices shaping the tourist experience of international visitors in Montenegro, a small tourism-dependent country aspiring to European Union membership. It examines how visitors engage with unfamiliar heritage across the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stages, drawing on qualitative research, including an analysis of official museum communication channels and mystery shopper observations conducted in selected institutions in 2025. The findings show that the most developed practices concern the pre-visit stage, particularly around travel planning, information search, and initial contact with institutions. Although foreign visitors are not the primary target of museum activities in Montenegro, ongoing EU accession and the growth of cultural tourism are increasingly reorienting museums towards

ZARZĄDZANIE DOŚWIADCZENIEM TURYSTYCZNYM W MUZEACH CZARNOGÓRY W KONTEKŚCIE AKCESJI DO UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ

Łukasz Gawęł

Jagiellonian University

ORCID 0000-0002-0504-3750

Anna Pluszyńska

Jagiellonian University

ORCID 0000-0003-0271-5176

Jovana Janinovic

University of Montenegro

ORCID 0000-0003-0945-0633

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule opisano praktyki zarządcze kształtujące doświadczenia zagranicznych turystów w Czarnogórze – niewielkim kraju gospodarczo zależnym od turystyki, aspirującym do członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej. Badanie dotyczy tego, jak turyści doświadczają kontaktu z nieznanym dziedzictwem kulturowym na etapie przed wizytą, w trakcie oraz po jej zakończeniu. Podstawę opracowania stanowią badania jakościowe obejmujące analizę oficjalnych kanałów komunikacji muzeów oraz obserwacje metodą tajemniczego klienta przeprowadzone w wybranych instytucjach w 2025 r. Wyniki wskazują, że najbardziej rozwinięte praktyki dotyczą etapu przed wizytą, w szczególności planowania podróży, poszukiwania informacji oraz pierwszego kontaktu z instytucją. Odbiorcy zagraniczni nie stanowią głównej grupy docelowej działalności muzeów w Czarnogórze, chociaż

international audiences. The study identifies a clear imbalance in the management of tourist experience across different stages of the visit and highlights the need to strategically incorporate foreign visitors into museum missions, translating this into coherent organizational practices grounded on principles of equal access and inclusion.

KEYWORDS

museum, heritage, management, tourism, Montenegro, European Union

METADANE

Muz., 2026(67)

Rocznik, eISSN 2391-4815

Data przyjęcia: 01.2026

Data recenzji: 02.2026

Data akceptacji: 05.2026

Data publikacji: 05.2026

DOI: 10.69500/m.110

Copyright: @Narodowy

Instytut Muzeów

WYDAWCA

Narodowy Instytut Muzeów © 2026

rocznikmuzealnictwo.nim.gov.pl

proces akcesji do UE oraz rozwój turystyki kulturowej stopniowo ukierunkowują te instytucje na publiczność międzynarodową. Badanie wskazuje na wyraźny brak równowagi w zarządzaniu doświadczeniem turystycznym na poszczególnych etapach wizyty oraz podkreśla potrzebę strategicznego włączenia turystów zagranicznych do misji muzeów, co powinno znaleźć odzwierciedlenie w spójnych praktykach organizacyjnych opartych na zasadach równego dostępu i inkluzywności.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

doświadczenie turystyczne, zarządzanie, muzea, Czarnogóra, turyści zagraniczni, akcesja do Unii Europejskiej

METADATA

Muz., 2026(67)

Annual, eISSN 2391-4815

Received: 01.2026

Reviewed: 02.2026

Accepted: 05.2026

Published: 05.2026

DOI: 10.69500/m.110

Copyright: @National Institute

for Museums

PUBLISHER

National Institute for Museums © 2026

rocznikmuzealnictwo.nim.gov.pl

INTRODUCTION

Smith (2006) demonstrates that heritage does not possess intrinsic value encoded in material objects, but is a process of meaning-making, selection and interpretation performed within specific social and institutional conditions. From this perspective, the museum experience is not about 'viewing' a collection; rather visitors engage in an understanding of the past and its relevance for the present through contact with exhibition narratives, spatial arrangements and institutional communication. Designing exhibitions and visitor paths thus becomes a practice of 'designing heritage experiences', in which the choice of means (language, scenography, forms of participation) shapes meanings perceived as credible, important and emotionally engaging. Visitor experience can, therefore, be intentionally managed through organizational and communication practices. In this context, museums become sites of negotiation

between authorized heritage discourse and the perspectives of external audiences, such as international visitors who do not share local codes of memory, language and symbolic references – thereby shaping the country's image and mediating between local heritage and an 'imagined' Europe.

Montenegro has aspired to European Union membership since 2010, and its museums operate within a broader process of adapting public institutions to European standards in cultural access, heritage protection, and tourism development. The accession process has brought increasing tourism and a growing role for museums as a first point of contact for international visitors. In 2024, Montenegro recorded over 2.6 million tourist arrivals and more than 15 million overnight stays, the vast majority generated by foreign visitors (MONSTAT 2024), figures that highlight the central role of international tourism in shaping the context in which museums operate.

Under these conditions, museums in Montenegro are increasingly expected to adapt to the needs of international visitors and the dynamics of a tourism-driven economy (Moric et al. 2021; Medin 2019; Ministarstvo održivog razvoja i turizma 2018), making the management of tourist experience a key dimension of museum activity.

Against this background, this study examines management practices adopted by museums in Montenegro as a tourism-dependent EU accession country. It analyses how international visitors engage with unfamiliar heritage across the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stages, focusing on barriers, narratives and the extent to which heritage is made accessible in line with the principles of equal access and inclusion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND – TOURIST EXPERIENCE

In contemporary tourism scholarship, tourism products are understood as combinations of services, facilities and experiences responding to tourists' motivations and expectations (Kaczmarek et al. 2010; Łazarek 2001). Rather than discrete services, they encompass encounters with places, institutions, narratives and infrastructures (Stasiak 2000), reflecting a broader shift towards understanding tourism as an experience.

A tourism product can be analysed from two perspectives: expectations before the visit and experiences during the trip (Table 1). The imagined product refers to meanings constructed prior to travel, shaped by media, cultural stereotypes and personal imaginaries (Salazar 2011), while the actual product consists of the services and impressions encountered during the visit, including both tangible and intangible aspects (Kaczmarek et al. 2002). The gap between these two is a key source of satisfaction or disappointment (Cherifi et al. 2018), and provides a useful framework for analysing tourist experience across different stages of the visit, including museum contexts. It is particularly relevant in settings undergoing institutional and organizational change – such as countries aspiring to European Union membership – where discrepancies between expectations and experiences may be more pronounced.

Table 1. Difference between the actual product and the imagined product.		
Category	Imagined tourist product	The actual tourism product
Features	Subjective perceptions, expectations	Real experiences and tangible impressions
Influencing factors	Media, marketing, stereotypes, cultural narratives, personal imaginaries	Service quality, staff professionalism, accessibility, price, additional amenities
Effects	Motivation to travel, formation of expectations	Satisfaction or disappointment, creation of memories
Stage in the journey process	Before departure (planning phase)	During and after the trip (experience and evaluation)

Source: own work.

There is broad consensus that museums can be approached as tourism products ‘consumed’ by visitors (Brida et al. 2017; Janowski 2007; Stasiak 2000; Herremann 1998), and that their accessibility contributes to the development of cultural and urban tourism (Richards 1996). Museums combine collections, exhibitions, location and activities into cultural experiences that affect emotions, knowledge and attitudes (Stasiak 2000), a perspective particularly useful for analysing how museums manage tourist experience (Nowacki and Kruczek 2021; Stasiak 2016, 2015).

The value of a museum as a tourism product is co-created by its visitors, shaping social bonds and cultural identity (Gawel 2023). While audience impact is often measured through attendance and ticket revenues (Pluszyńska 2022), this efficiency-oriented approach has been criticized, even as museums face growing pressure to adapt their offer to visitor needs (Kasperska 2015). As Kowalczyk (2010) notes, this involves becoming more accessible, open, and visitor-oriented.

Foreign tourists tend to have high expectations regarding service quality, information availability and innovative displays and their growing importance reflects the broader expansion of international tourism and the role of museums within cultural tourism (Theme Index. Museum Index 2023, 2024). Research shows that deeper museum experiences enhance understanding of a place, while visitor satisfaction increases the likelihood of return visits and recommendations (Chen 2024; Richards 2018), with the result that visitor experience is increasingly central to museum strategies, moving institutions beyond a purely collection-centred paradigm (Kotler and Kotler 2000).

Falk and Dierking (2012) conceptualize visitor engagement across three stages – pre-visit, on-site and post-visit – which provides the main framework for this analysis. Before visiting, audiences seek clear practical information in multiple languages, often through websites, social media and platforms such as TripAdvisor, and expect tools that support visit planning (Huo et al. 2024; Riva and Agostino 2022; Kisiel 2021; Sheng and Chen 2012; Marty 2007). During the visit, they value service quality, comfort, accessibility and clear interpretation, and expect coherent narratives and openness to multiple perspectives, supported by guides or apps (Kim and Kim 2025; Drygalska 2024; Komarac et al. 2024). After the visit, expectations focus

on continued engagement, access to digital resources and opportunities to share experiences, with loyalty-building and incentives to return also playing an important role (Kiala et al. 2025; Yang et al. 2023; Budge and Burness 2018). Tangible and intangible souvenirs remain important, including not only publications and merchandise but also exhibition spaces designed for sharing experiences, such as areas suitable for selfies (Chlebus-Grudzień 2018).

These rising expectations across all three stages are particularly consequential in countries undergoing institutional change related to European integration. Kasperska (2015) argues that openness to Europe, freedom of travel, technological development and rising visitor expectations are transforming museums, compelling them to modernize exhibitions and communication and respond more directly to market demands, and notes that EU membership influences the position and image of cultural institutions in the tourism market. Managing the tourist experience becomes part of a broader process of institutional adaptation.

Montenegro is a particularly relevant case in this regard, as its museums operate under the combined pressure of EU accession and growing international tourism. The implementation of standards related to accessibility, digitization, transparency and participation is becoming important not only for competitiveness but also for meeting the expectations of foreign audiences and the literature suggests that this requires not only investment, but also organizational change, staff training, coherent tourist information and local community involvement in co-creating the cultural offer (Moric et al. 2021).

The Montenegrin museum sector therefore provides a useful case for analysing the management of tourist experience in a small EU-accession country. This article analyses managerial approaches to international audiences across the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stages of the visitor journey, identifying the conditions barriers shaping the transformation of museums into more visitor-oriented and tourism-sensitive institutions. This process is particularly significant given that previous research suggests Montenegrin museums remain largely rooted in traditional, inward-looking organizational cultures with limited engagement with contemporary museological trends (Medin 2019).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the study was to analyse management practices shaping the museum experience of individual foreign tourists in Montenegro, particularly in the context of EU accession and the anticipated increase in international tourism. Evidence from smaller EU accession countries suggests that integration can significantly accelerate tourism growth: Estonia's tourism sector expanded by approximately one third within two years of joining the EU (Jarvis and Kallas 2008), indicating that accession creates new demands and expectations for cultural institutions – including museums – in relation to international audiences.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How are management practices in Montenegrin museums organized across the different stages of the visitor journey (pre-visit, during the visit and post-visit)?
2. To what extent do these practices address the needs and expectations of foreign visitors?
3. What organizational and structural factors shape the tourist experience in the context of EU accession?

A qualitative approach was adopted as the most appropriate for capturing the subtler aspects of the experiences and practices of foreign visitors to museums in Montenegro. (Creswell 2013).

The first stage involved an analysis of information available through the official communication channels of the selected museums, conducted in June 2025, assessing the availability and quality of online information supporting the pre-visit phase.

The analysis was based on six evaluation criteria:

- I. Museum website available in English or other foreign languages.
- II. Basic practical information (opening hours, ticket prices, location, contact details).
- III. Tools supporting visit planning (e.g. online booking, e-tickets, events calendar).
- IV. Cultural context in English (e.g. collection description, museum history, regional context).
- V. Consistency of visual and informational communication.
- VI. Additional resources for foreign visitors (e.g. PDF guides, audio guides, apps, FAQ).

The second stage involved visits to selected museums using the mystery visitor method, enabling analysis of service quality, communication, accessibility and visitor experience under natural conditions from the perspective of an anonymous visitor (Abdel Wahab Abdel Rady 2019; Karwowski 2018; Jacob et al. 2018; Finn 2001).

The research was conducted in July 2025 by two independent researchers following a predetermined scenario, using a structured observation sheet with clearly defined criteria (Wilson 1998). Six areas were assessed on a four-point scale (0–3), reflecting the degree of development of each element:

- I. Staff – English language skills, openness and responsiveness.
- II. Exhibition narrative – availability of English descriptions and clarity of interpretation.
- III. Additional materials – audio guides, apps and extended content (e.g. QR codes).
- IV. Visitor amenities – comfort, signage and basic infrastructure (e.g. café, shop, rest areas).
- V. Accessibility – facilities for visitors with disabilities and families with children.
- VI. Exhibition quality – visual presentation, lighting, graphic design and condition of exhibits.

Observations were recorded immediately after each visit. Each researcher independently assessed their experience; results were then compared and discussed to reach a final evaluation, reducing individual bias. Ratings ran from 0 (absent) to 3 (high level of development).

The third stage examined material 'traces' of the visit available to international tourists – publications, museum-branded merchandise – assessed during the same visits using a structured evaluation sheet, covering language availability and diversity of offer.

To strengthen interpretation of the findings, a researcher from Montenegro was involved at the analysis stage in a supervisory role, providing local contextual knowledge and engaging in critical dialogue with the other researchers, helping to refine interpretation and reduce bias associated with an exclusively external perspective.

Eight museums were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on institutions in major tourist destinations, where the presence of foreign visitors is most significant. According to MONSTAT data for 2023–2024, over 90% of tourism in Montenegro is concentrated along the coast, with Budva as the leading destination, followed by Herceg Novi, Kotor and Tivat. Six towns in total. Museums in Cetinje were selected due to their affiliation with the National Museum of Montenegro, the country's principal heritage institution. Perast, although a small town, was included owing to the opening of a new permanent exhibition at its Town Museum in 2022, making it relevant for analysing contemporary exhibition practices.



1. Part of the exhibition; Perast – Perast Town Museum; photo by: Ł. Gawel

The selected institutions reflect diversity in collections and institutional profiles – national, municipal and specialized museums – enabling comparison across organizational contexts.

Montenegro has a relatively small museum sector, comprising 31 museums and museum collections as of 2021, with approximately 150,000 visitors, 109,000 items in inventory and around 17,000 exhibits on display (MONSTAT 2024). This limited scale makes the selected sample analytically meaningful despite its size. The study does not aim to provide a representative overview of all museums in Montenegro, but rather an exploratory analysis of selected cases relevant to international tourism.

Table 2. List of museums in Montenegro observed by researchers.

	Museum name	Town	Collection profile
1.	Njegoš Museum – Biljarda (Njegošev Muzej Biljarda)	Cetinje	Memorial collection of Petar II Petrović-Njegoš; manuscripts, personal belongings, historical documents, 19th-century interiors
2.	Fine Arts Museum (Umjetnički Muzej)	Cetinje	Fine arts collection; paintings, sculptures, drawings, Yugoslav and Montenegrin art (19th–20th century)
3.	Museum of King Nikola (Muzej Kralja Nikole)	Cetinje	Historical and memorial collection; royal residence interiors, personal belongings of King Nikola I, documents, 19th-early 20th-century artefacts
4.	Budva City Museum (Muzej Grada Budve)	Budva	Archaeological and historical collection; artefacts from ancient and medieval Budva, ceramics, mosaics, maritime heritage
5.	Naval Heritage Museum (Nautički Muzej)	Tivat	Maritime and naval heritage collection; ship models, naval equipment, Yugoslav submarine, maritime technology and history
6.	The City Museum Mirko Komnenović (Gradski Muzej Mirko Komnenović)	Herceg Novi	Local history collection; ethnographic objects, historical artefacts, furniture, documents related to Herceg Novi and the Boka Kotorska region
7.	Perast Town Museum (Muzej Grada Perasta)	Perast	Maritime and local history collection; artefacts related to Perast's seafaring tradition, portraits of prominent families, furniture, historical documents
8.	Maritime Museum Kotor (Pomorski Muzej Kotor)	Kotor	Maritime heritage collection; naval history, ship models, weapons, uniforms, archival documents related to the Bay of Kotor

Source: Own work.

RESULTS

The empirical analysis began with desk research: a systematic examination of content available on museum websites, compiled and evaluated using a four-point scale (0–3), to ensure comparability across institutions. Where the first criterion (language availability) was assessed as 0, the remaining criteria were also assigned 0, since the absence of an accessible language version prevented further evaluation from the perspective of a foreign visitor.

The most comprehensive, modern and well-resourced website among the surveyed museums is that of the National Museum of Montenegro in Cetinje. Although some digital features remain limited, it is by far the strongest in terms of content, offering multilingual promotional materials, downloadable exhibition guides, and a modern, consistent design – a quality that most probably reflects the national significance of this institution.

Table 3. Degree of availability of information enabling foreign visitors to plan a visit to a museum (on a scale of 0-3).

Museum name	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Average
Cetinje Njegoš Museum – Biljarda	3	3	3	3	3	2	2,8
Cetinje Fine Arts Museum	3	3	3	3	3	2	2,8
Cetinje Museum of King Nikola	3	3	3	3	3	2	2,8
Kotor Maritime Museum Kotor	3	3	0	2	3	0	1,83
Perast Perast Town Museum	3	2	0	2	2	0	1,5
Herceg Novi The City Museum Mirko Komnenović	3	1	0	2	0	0	1
Tivat Naval Heritage Museum	3	1	0	0	1	0	0,8
Budva Budva City Museum	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Own work.

The Kotor Maritime Museum website also stands out: carefully designed and rich in photographs and textual commentary. The attention given to tourists is unsurprising given the importance of tourism to Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Given the criterion of tourist popularity (MONSTAT 2024), it is surprising that the Budva City Museum has by far the weakest website, with no English version at all, particularly so given that the site itself contains a video labelled in both Montenegrin and English (*Short informative video presentation of Budva's town museum* – original spelling). Equally surprising is the Naval Heritage Museum in Tivat, a coastal town served by Montenegro's second international airport. Tivat itself is presented on a modern, well-designed website, fully accessible in English, Russian and Montenegrin; the maritime museum, however, has no separate website. Information about it is confined to a brief note buried as a subpage (Home/Attractions/Naval Heritage Museum) – despite the museum offering a genuine attraction: the opportunity to board an authentic Yugoslav submarine, alongside a small exhibition on the history of sea exploration.

Next, direct observations were carried out in selected institutions. The results, presented in tabular form, allow us to determine the degree to which individual museums are adapted to the needs of visitors from outside Montenegro.

Table 4. Degree of accessibility and service for foreign tourists in the museums surveyed – observation results (scale 0–3).

Museum name	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Average
Kotor Maritime Museum Kotor	2	2	3	2	2	3	2,3
Perast Perast Town Museum	3	2	3	2	1	2	2,2
Cetinje Museum of King Nikola	2	1	2	1	0	1	1,2
Cetinje Njegoš Museum – Biljarda	3	1	2	0	0	0	1
Cetinje Fine Arts Museum	3	1	0	1	0	1	1
Budva Budva City Museum	2	1	0	0	0	0	0,5
Herceg Novi The City Museum Mirko Komnenović	2	1	0	0	0	0	0,5
Tivat Naval Heritage Museum	2	0	0	0*	0	0*	0,3

* does not apply to the submarine available to tourists

Source: own work.

The on-site observations reveal several consistent patterns. Staff generally demonstrated good English proficiency and a positive attitude towards visitors, although this varied across individual interactions; at the Fine Arts Museum in Cetinje, for instance, staff engagement significantly enhanced the visitor experience.

Museum collections are often rich and diverse, but their presentation is frequently constrained by infrastructural limitations. Many exhibitions suffer from outdated display techniques, inconsistent graphic design and inadequate lighting or equipment, and in some cases the condition of exhibits and the use of low-quality reproductions further diminish the experience. These limitations point to structural underfunding affecting the overall management of tourist experience.

A further weakness is the absence of audience differentiation. None of the museums offered dedicated interpretive paths or facilities for children; only isolated elements – such as the submarine exhibition in the Naval Heritage Museum in Tivat – can be considered engaging for younger visitors.



2. The interior of a submarine; Tivat – Naval Heritage Museum; photo by: Ł. Gawet

Accessibility for visitors with special needs is generally low. Most museums lack basic infrastructure such as lifts, ramps or adapted exhibition elements, partly due to their location in historic buildings, and provision for visually or hearing-impaired visitors is largely absent, with only isolated exceptions, such as a Braille guide at the Maritime Museum in Kotor.



3. Part of the exhibition; Kotor – Maritime Museum Kotor; photo by: Ł. Gawel

In the post-visit stage, little attention is paid to sustaining visitor engagement. In most institutions the offer of post-visit materials is either very limited or entirely absent, with only basic souvenirs available and little evidence of strategies for maintaining contact with visitors after their visit. Only selected museums – the Maritime Museum in Kotor and the Museum of King Nikola in Cetinje – offer a broader range of publications and souvenirs, including materials in foreign languages. Post-visit engagement is clearly the least developed stage of tourist experience management.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that Montenegrin museums are operating in a transitional phase, characterized by a visible gap between organizational culture and infrastructural conditions. Staff openness and a positive attitude towards foreign visitors coexist with outdated exhibition practices and limited technical infrastructure – a tension identified in other studies of cultural institutions in Montenegro, which similarly note the combination of strong professional commitment and structural constraints in digitization, communication and audience development (Marković 2019).

This is consistent with Medin's (2019) observation that Montenegrin museums remain rooted in traditional, inward-looking organizational models, with limited engagement with contemporary museological trends. Policy-oriented research likewise highlights the need for a shift towards more integrated, visitor-oriented and

market-responsive approaches, including improved interpretation, infrastructure and communication (Ministarstvo održivog razvoja i turizma 2018) – a tension this study finds reflected in the management of tourist experience.

From the perspective of the visitor journey, the most developed practices concern the pre-visit stage, where museums provide relatively accessible information for foreign audiences. This aligns with broader research indicating that cultural institutions increasingly prioritize digital communication and online visibility as key tools for attracting visitors and shaping pre-arrival expectations (Nikolaou 2024; Shi 2024), and supports the understanding of tourism as an experience constructed before the visit – the imagined product discussed in the literature.

Practices during and after the visit remain significantly less developed, limiting the overall coherence of the tourist experience. Similar patterns have been observed in other small or emerging tourism destinations, where investment tends to focus on promotion rather than on-site experience design or post-visit engagement (Gao and Yu 2024). In Montenegro, this imbalance is further compounded by limited funding, insufficient staff training and the absence of comprehensive audience development strategies.

The weakness of post-visit engagement is particularly significant, as contemporary research emphasizes the importance of extending visitor relationships beyond the physical visit through digital content, community-building and participatory practices (Budge and Burness 2018). The findings suggest that Montenegrin museums rarely implement such strategies, focusing instead on basic souvenir offers rather than longer-term engagement mechanisms.

This imbalance takes on added significance in the context of EU accession, which not only increases the scale of international tourism but introduces new expectations regarding accessibility, participation and the quality of cultural services. European policy frameworks emphasize the role of museums as inclusive, socially engaged and audience-oriented institutions, capable of fostering intercultural dialogue and knowledge exchange. It should be noted that museums in Montenegro do implement modern educational programmes for their own citizens, drawing on collections for equality education and intercultural dialogue (Kuzman 2024). The limited adaptation to the expectations of international audiences nevertheless points to the need for further organizational transformation – particularly in visitor engagement, interpretation, and the integration of digital tools.

CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that management practices in Montenegrin museums are uneven. Only a limited number of institutions provide a well-developed, multilingual online offer at the pre-visit stage. On-site, the visitor experience relies primarily on staff engagement within persistent infrastructural constraints, and the post-visit stage remains the least developed component of the visitor journey. The findings point to the need to incorporate foreign visitors more explicitly into museum strategies and to translate this into coherent management practices across all stages of the visitor journey. In the context of EU accession and increasing international tourism, this shift appears essential for strengthening the role of museums as accessible and competitive cultural institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has been supported by the Critical Heritage Studies Hub (CHSH) Flagship Project under the Strategic Programme Excellence Initiative at the Jagiellonian University.

REFERENCES

- Abdel Wahab Abdel Rady, H. (2019). Mystery shopper as a tool to measure staff performance in travel agencies. *Minia Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 8(1), 1–27.
- Brida, J. G., Nogare, C. D., & Scuderi, R. (2017). Learning at the museum: Factors influencing visit length. *Tourism Economics*, 23(2), 281–294.
- Budge, K., & Burness, A. (2018). Museum objects and Instagram: Agency and communication in digital engagement. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 32(2), 137–150.
- Chen, J. (2024). Factors affecting cultural transmission in museum tourism: An empirical study with mediation analysis. *SAGE Open*, 14(3), 1–17.
- Cherifi, B., Smith, A., Maitland, R., & Stevenson, N. (2018). Beyond image: Imagined experiences of a destination. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(6), 748–755.
- Chlebus-Grudzień, P. (2018). Selfie at a museum: Defining a paradigm for an analysis of taking (self-portrait) photographs at museum exhibitions. *Tourism*, 28(1), 7–13.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Projektowanie badań naukowych. Metody jakościowe, ilościowe i mieszane*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Drygalska, E. (2024). Technologically mediated experiences of visitors to the Frederic Chopin Museum: Post-phenomenological perspective on touchscreen affordances. *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage*, 17(1), 1–14.
- Falk, J. H., & Dierking, L. D. (2012). *The museum experience revisited*. Routledge.
- Finn, A. (2001). Mystery shopper benchmarking of durable-goods chains and stores. *Journal of Service Research*, 3(4), 310–320.
- Gaweł, Ł. (2023). Museums without visitors? Crisis of Polish museums during the COVID-19 pandemic and their revival under the digital experience offer. *Sustainability*, 15, 11844.
- Gao, B., & Yu, S. (2024). Upgrading museum experience: Insights into offline visitor perceptions through social media trends. *Emerging Trends in Drugs, Addictions, and Health*, 4, 100137.
- Herreman, Y. (1998). Museums and tourism: Culture and consumption. *Museum International*, 50(3), 4–12.
- Huo, H., Shen, K., Han, C., & Yang, M. (2024). Measuring the relationship between museum attributes and visitors: An application of topic modelling on museum online reviews. *PLOS ONE*, 19(7), 1–19.
- Jacob, S., Schiffino, N., & Biard, B. (2018). The mystery shopper: A tool to measure public service delivery? *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 84(1), 164–184.
- Janowski, I. (2007). Muzeum jako produkt turystyczny i obiekt dydaktyczny. In A. Stasiak (Ed.), *Kultura i turystyka – Razem czy oddzielnie?* (pp. 135–149). Wydawnictwo WSTH w Łodzi.
- Jarvis, J., & Kallas, P. (2008). Estonian tourism and accession effect: The impact of European Union membership on development patterns. *Tourism Geographies*, 10(4), 474–494.
- Kaczmarek, J., Stasiak, A., & Włodarczyk, B. (2002). Produkt turystyczny. *Turystyka i Hotelarstwo*, (1), 33–54.
- Kaczmarek, J., Stasiak, A., & Włodarczyk, B. (2010). *Produkt turystyczny. Pomysł, organizacja, zarządzanie*. Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne.
- Karwowski, M. (2018). Secret client – sposób na wykorzystanie doświadczeń użytkowników w ocenie jakości bibliotek. *Biuletyn EBIB*, 5(128), 1–13.
- Kasperska, E. (2015). Muzea jako produkt turystyczny. Implikacje integracji z Unią Europejską. *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 4(357), 88–99.
- Kiala, M., Folinas, D., Agapitou, C., Rotsios, K., & Triantafyllou, D. (2025). Evaluating service quality in a technology-oriented museum. *Journal of Cultural Marketing Strategy*, 9(2), 119–134.
- Kim, J., & Kim, S. Y. (2025). Multidimensional analysis of visitor interaction with museum apps. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 1–15.
- Kisiel, P. (2021). A young audience's expectations of a contemporary museum of art. *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, 70(2), 11–28.
- Komarac, T., Dosen, D. O., & Zabka, V. (2024). Managing visitor experience in museums: Edutainment and authenticity. *Engineering Economics*, 35(4), 396–409.

- Kotler, N., & Kotler, P. (2000). Can museums be all things to all people? *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 18(3), 271–287.
- Kowalczyk, W. (2010). Celebrować, zabawiać czy edukować? *Muzealnictwo*, (51), 55–62.
- Kuzman, F. (2024). *Mostovi multikulturalizma kroz muzejsko obrazovanje*. Centar za građansko obrazovanje.
- Łazarek, R. (2001). *Ekonomika turystyki*. Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna.
- Marković, D. (Ed.). (2019). *MONTENEGRO – Libraries, Archives and Museums (LAM 2019): Proceedings*.
- Marty, P. F. (2007). Museum websites and museum visitors. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 22(4), 337–360.
- Medin, D. (2019). Museums as cultural hubs in Montenegro: Between future and tradition. *13th International Summer School of Museology*.
- Ministarstvo održivog razvoja i turizma. (2018). *Strategija razvoja kulturnog turizma Crne Gore do 2023*. Vlada Crne Gore.
- MONSTAT. (2024). *Arrivals and overnight stays of tourists*. <https://monstat.org>
- Moric, I., Pekovic, S., Janinovic, J., Perovic, Đ., & Griesbeck, M. (2021). Cultural tourism and community engagement. *Business Systems Research*, 12(1), 164–178.
- Nikolaou, P. (2024). Museums and the post-digital. *Heritage*, 7(3), 1784–1800.
- Nowacki, M., & Kruczek, Z. (2021). Experience marketing at museums. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 36(1), 62–81.
- Pluszyńska, A. (2022). Frekwencja online – jak ją monitorować? *Zarządzanie Mediami*, 10(2), 119–133.
- Richards, G. (1996). Introduction: Cultural tourism in Europe. In G. Richards (Ed.), *Culture and tourism in Europe* (pp. 8–20).
- Richards, G. (2018). Cultural tourism: A review of trends. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, 12–21.
- Riva, P., & Agostino, D. (2022). Latent dimensions of museum experience. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 37(6), 616–640.
- Salazar, N. B. (2011). Tourism imaginaries. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), 863–882.
- Sheng, C. W., & Chen, M. C. (2012). Experience expectations of museum visitors. *Tourism Management*, 33, 53–60.
- Shi, J. (2024). Social media and museum visibility. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 181, 01033.
- Smith, L. (2006). *The uses of heritage*. Routledge.
- Stasiak, A. (2000). Muzeum jako produkt turystyczny. In A. Szwichtenberg & E. Dziegieć (Eds.), *Przemysł turystyczny* (pp. 165–182).
- Stasiak, A. (2015). Triada doświadczeń turystycznych. *Prace Naukowe UE Wrocław*, (379), 332–347.
- Stasiak, A. (2016). Doświadczenie jako paradygmat turystyki. *Folia Turistica*, (41), 191–216.
- Stasiak, A., & Włodarczyk, B. (2003). Produkt turystyczny – miejsce. *Turyzm*, 13(1), 55–80.
- Theme Index. (2024). *Museum Index 2023*. TEA/AECOM.
- Wilson, A. M. (2001). Mystery shopping. *Psychology & Marketing*, 18(7), 721–734.
- Yang, Y., Liu, S., & Song, X. (2023). The co-creation of museum experience value. *SAGE Open*, 1–19.

ŁUKASZ GAWEL

PhD, Professor at the Jagiellonian University. Member of the research and teaching staff at the Institute of Culture at the Faculty of Management and Social Communication at the Jagiellonian University. He specializes in the field of cultural heritage management and public cultural institutions, with a particular focus on museums.

ANNA PLUSZYŃSKA

PhD in management studies, adjunct at the Institute of Culture Management of the Faculty of Management and Social Communication at the Jagiellonian University. A manager of culture, coordinator of accessibility and openness, she is also a member of the Research Institute of Cultural Organizations (www.ibok.org.pl). Her research focuses on intellectual property management (particularly copyright in museums) as well as the broader themes of openness and accessibility in cultural institutions.

JOVANA JANINOVIC

Teaches heritage management at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management Kotor, University of Montenegro. She holds doctorates from the University of Valladolid and Pavol Jozef Safarik University in Kosice, and master's degrees from Charles University in Prague and EHESS Paris. She has held visiting researcher and research fellow positions at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, the University of Paris-Est, the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the University of Bielefeld. Her publications span heritage tourism, smart heritage, urban and cultural geography. She is also an expert in the pedagogical design of online courses, experiential learning, and cultural entrepreneurship. She has coordinated joint research projects with Fudan University, University Paris 1, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and the University of Maribor, and has served as community engagement leader in the Ulysseus European University.