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**STORYTELLING IN HERITAGE TOURISM: AN EXPLORATION OF CO-CREATIVE
EXPERIENCES FROM A TOURIST PERSPECTIVE**



UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS

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EXPERIENCES FROM A TOURIST PERSPECTIVE**

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made under the supervision of:

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and

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Work Authorship Declaration

I declare to be the author of this work, which is unique and unprecedented. Authors and works consulted are properly cited in the text and are included in the listing of references.

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(signature)

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SUMMARY

(Abstract)

Heritage attractions and museums are under pressure to adapt to the needs of experience-seeking tourists. If they are to remain competitive, managers must acknowledge the visitor's role as a co-creator and facilitate heritage experiences that privilege co-creation between the experience provider and consumer. Storytelling has been posited as a co-creative tool that increases consumer engagement and leads to memorable tourist experiences. As such, storytelling presents itself as an accessible and effective way to offer experiences that are more aligned with the expectations of the modern heritage tourist. However, a lack of knowledge exists regarding storytelling's definition, implementation, and impact in heritage tourism settings. This work addresses these problems by identifying the various elements of heritage storytelling, providing a practical example of how these elements can be implemented in a real service context, and evaluating the impact of storytelling on visitors. Based on a review of the literature, the author created an experimental methodological framework that breaks down heritage storytelling into its various elements. Using this framework, a "storytelling tour" was designed and implemented at the Islamic Museum of Tavira. This tour was then tested on three groups of participants, who then participated in focus groups to share their thoughts on the storytelling experience. Focus group data was analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis in NVivo. Data analysis revealed that, overall, participants received the "storytelling tour" positively. Regarding storytelling's impact on the visitor's experience, three central themes were identified: emotional engagement, imagination, and memorability. Participants also made suggestions as to how the experience could have been improved considering factors of authenticity and participation. These findings solidify storytelling's relevance in heritage tourism contexts, as well as offer a preliminary guide as to how to implement storytelling in the experience design of a heritage attraction or museum.

keywords: Storytelling, Co-creation, Heritage tourism, New museology

RESUMO

Na Economia de Experiência, os museus e demais atrações de cariz histórico e patrimonial sentem a necessidade de se adaptar a um novo tipo de turista que busca novas experiências. No sentido de assegurarem a sua competitividade, é imperativo que entendam que o turista, hoje, é co-criador da sua própria experiência e, por conseguinte, que a sua oferta deve integrar oportunidades de co-criação do turista. A investigação recente tem evidenciado a importância da co-criação e o seu contributo para o sucesso das organizações; todavia, não há ainda uma metodologia consensual que considere a especificidade dos museus e outras atrações patrimoniais. Uma das estratégias co-criativas de maior sucesso é o *storytelling*. Esta abordagem é acessível em termos de implementação e económicos, e proporciona experiências memoráveis. Como tal, o *storytelling* é uma ferramenta que os museus e outras atrações patrimoniais podem implementar de modo a estar alinhados com as expectativas do turista moderno. No entanto, em termos práticos, existem lacunas quanto à própria definição de *storytelling*, acerca de como de ser implementado e mesmo quanto ao seu impacto no turismo patrimonial. O presente trabalho pretende contribuir para ultrapassar esta lacuna através da identificação concreta de problemas relativos a este tema que se identificam na literatura, assim como na aplicação experimental do *storytelling* num contexto museológico, com a subsequente avaliação do seu impacto ao nível da experiência do turista. A proposta experimental foi elaborada com base numa revisão crítica da literatura e aplica o *storytelling* num contexto museológico. Para tal, foi criada e implementada uma visita guiada com o recurso ao *storytelling* no Museu Islâmico de Tavira. A visita foi realizada em três momentos e em que três grupos de participantes voluntários participaram. Subsequentemente estes participantes partilharam as suas percepções em contexto de *focus group* após a visita. Com os dados extraídos dos *focus groups* foi elaborada uma análise temática reflexiva com recurso ao *software NVivo*. Os resultados da análise revelaram uma apreciação positiva do *storytelling* por parte dos participantes. Concretamente, demonstraram alguma surpresa quanto ao papel das histórias na visita, as quais tornaram a experiência mais memorável e interessante. No que diz respeito ao impacto da abordagem através do *storytelling* na experiência dos participantes, foram identificados três temas principais: ligação emocional, imaginação e memorabilidade. Em suma, esta abordagem providenciou a cada participante uma experiência que foi estimulante, na imaginação e emocionalmente, e proporcionou uma experiência memorável. O resultado final foi

uma experiência co-criativa que efetivamente permitiu o visitante criar uma ligação, pessoal e educativa, ao património, portanto muito contraste em relação à oferta tendencialmente estática providenciada por este tipo de atrações turísticas. Outro aspeto importante no estudo foi a contribuição dos participantes na forma de sugestões acerca de como melhorar a experiência de *storytelling*, em particular, no que diz respeito aos temas de autenticidade e participação ativa na experiência. Em concreto, na sua grande maioria, os participantes sugeriram que a visita integrasse mais elementos que ligassem o passado ao modo de vida atual na cidade de Tavira, de modo a entender a herança cultural que perdurou até aos dias de hoje. Outros elementos que foram sugeridos de modo a melhorar a experiência foram o recurso a tecnologias e atividades interativas. De um modo geral, os resultados deste estudo corroboram os de estudos anteriores, em especial, no que diz respeito à relevância da inclusão do *storytelling* no turismo histórico-cultural e patrimonial. Este estudo oferece ainda um guia preliminar sobre como se implementar estratégias de *storytelling* nestes contextos. Ainda que tenha sido desenvolvido e completado com sucesso, este trabalho apresenta limitações. Destacam-se, em especial, inúmeras limitações criadas pela conjuntura atual da pandemia de Covid-19. A conjuntura levou a que houvesse constantes e imprevisíveis limitações na realização do programa experimental, tanto a nível de marcação de datas, como no número de participantes disponíveis para participar no estudo. Estes constrangimentos tiveram inevitavelmente um impacto negativo na quantidade de informação e dados gerados por cada visita. Consequentemente, em termos metodológicos, os resultados deste trabalho apresentam limitações em termos de validade, transferibilidade e replicabilidade. Contudo, o estudo realizado permitiu obter um conjunto importante de resultados que contribuem não só para a literatura e também para monumentos e/ou museus que considerem implementar estratégias de *storytelling* na sua oferta. Este trabalho providencia não só um exemplo de implementação destas estratégias que não tem custos financeiros, como também da reação que pode ser esperada por parte dos turistas que visitem estas atrações turísticas. Este contributo é bastante relevante pela crescente necessidade de sustentar a posição competitiva no mercado das atrações turísticas ligadas ao património. Tal afigura-se de particular relevância numa altura em que os turistas cada vez mais procuram experiências que os marquem. Outro contributo importante deste estudo é que abre vias de investigação futura, nomeadamente no que diz respeito à necessidade de uma revisão sistemática e exaustiva da literatura com o objetivo de identificar todos os possíveis elementos de *storytelling* que possam ser implementados em contexto de turismo patrimonial. Estudos futuros

poderão ainda optar por uma abordagem experimental em conjunto com uma análise de dados quantitativa de modo a inferir uma relação de causa e efeito entre *storytelling* e outros elementos da experiência da visita na perspectiva do turista em contextos de turismo patrimonial. Tendo estes pontos em consideração, realça-se a originalidade deste trabalho na sua visão exaustiva de como estratégias de *storytelling* podem ser implementados em contextos de atrações de turismo patrimonial, bem como na avaliação de como estas estratégias têm impacto do ponto de vista do turista.

Palavras-chave: Storytelling, Co-criação, Turismo patrimonial, Nova museologia

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ABBREVIATIONS LIST

SDL Service Dominant Logic

1. INTRODUCTION

Storytelling has been identified as a crucial component to the design of tourist experiences (Moscardo, 2017a, 2017b, 2020). For the managers of heritage attractions that are seeking to adopt an “experiential” approach, storytelling has presented itself as a co-creative tool that effectively engages audiences and leads to memorable tourist experiences (Bec et al., 2019; Mossberg, 2008; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Robiady et al., 2020; Ross & Saxena, 2019; Sundin et al., 2018). However, research has only just begun exploring the implications of storytelling in heritage tourism interpretation and experience design (Moscardo, 2008, 2017a, 2017b, 2020). If they are to meet the demands of experientially motivated tourists and remain competitive in a challenging tourism market (Berrada, 2017; Calver & Page, 2013; Frost et al., 2020; García Haro et al., 2014; Leighton, 2007; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), heritage attractions need guidance as to how to implement co-creative activities, such as storytelling, in their experience offering (Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019; Wyman et al., 2011). In addition, little research has explored how heritage tourists perceive storytelling and the way it impacts their experience (Baker et al., 2016; Bedford, 2001). This work aims to contribute to an emerging body of knowledge concerning how storytelling can be implemented in heritage tourism experiences and its influence on the visitor experience from the perspective of the tourist. This chapter will introduce the study by first touching on the context of the research topic, presenting the research problem, aims, objectives, and questions, and finally by explaining its significance and limitations.

1.1 Context

Heritage sites have long held a “curatorial” management approach (Calver & Page, 2013; Chhabra, 2008; Garrod & Fyall, 2000). However, as the tourism market began to transform with the emergence of the *Experience Economy* (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), tourists became disinterested in traditional heritage attractions and museum settings (Calver & Page, 2013; Chhabra, 2008; Leighton, 2007; Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019). Many heritage attractions have now embraced the experience era by transforming their service offering into one that is more engaging and interactive (Bec et al., 2019; Frost et al., 2020; Leighton, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Robiady et al., 2020). More specifically, they have begun to shift their approach and attract more tourists via ‘co-creation’ between themselves and their end consumers (Mijnheer

& Gamble, 2019). This implies the active participation of the consumer as an actor in producing the experience and, consequently, creating value by interacting with the provider (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). “What has emerged as the basis for *unique value to consumers* is their experience[.] [The] quality of that experience is dependent on the nature of the involvement the customer [...] has had in co-creating it” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004: 9). The resulting value of these experiences is something consumers are willing to pay for (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) or even pay more for (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019).

This approach has allowed some heritage attractions to regain their competitive edge in the market (Leighton, 2007), particularly by improving their customers’ perceived value of their experience (Meng & Cui, 2020; Prebensen et al., 2013; Prebensen et al., 2014; Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Considering the Service Dominant Logic (SDL) paradigm proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004), the success of this new approach may be due to the recognition and understanding of how value is co-created between consumers and the provider via a collaborative experience. “With the increased tendency for the tourism product and/or experience to be co-created between tourist and provider, comes a need to better understand what drives these tourists to visit specific sites and what they would like to experience whilst there” (Ghisoiu et al., 2017: 2126). Said differently, a deeper comprehension of what type of co-creative experiences tourists desire is needed in tourism and heritage studies.

1.2 Research problem

Storytelling is a powerful means of engaging audiences (Abma, 2003; Frost et al., 2020; Pounsford, 2007; Sundin et al., 2018). It has been identified as a type co-creative experience that offers much potential in terms of visitor engagement, meaning making, and memorability (Frost et al., 2020; Mossberg, 2008; Robiady et al., 2020; D. Ross & Saxena, 2019; Sundin et al., 2018). An emerging body of knowledge has solidified the relevance of storytelling in the “experience tourism” era of the twenty-first century (Bassano et al., 2019; Moin et al., 2020; Moscardo, 2020; Mossberg et al., 2010; Weiler & Black, 2015). In fact, stories have become a central component to tourism practice, especially in tourist experience design. More specifically, at the core of the tourism system where tourist, provider, and community

intersect, it is agreed that storytelling can be used to co-create tourist experiences (Moscardo, 2020).

Previous research on the topic of storytelling in heritage tourism experiences have largely focused on guided visits (Chronis, 2005; Weiler & Black, 2015). More recently, studies have begun focusing primarily on digital storytelling in heritage tourism settings (Dal Falco & Vassos, 2017; Katifori et al., 2018; Katifori, Tsitou, et al., 2020; Psomadaki et al., 2019). However, most of these studies fail to clearly explain what storytelling consists of for museums and heritage attractions. Overall, there is a general lack of clarity regarding storytelling's definition, characteristics, and implementation in this context. In many cases, the definition of storytelling can be overextended to include a variety of purely information-based experiences (whether they be digital or delivered by a tour guide) (Katifori et al., 2018). This has led to storytelling becoming a muddied term that is difficult to concretely implement in the processes of heritage experience facilitation. In addition, although much is known regarding storytelling's impact on tourist experiences overall (Bassano et al., 2019; Hsu et al., 2009; Moscardo, 2017a, 2020; Mossberg, 2008), this question needs to be further addressed with a specific focus on heritage tourism experiences (Frost et al., 2020; D. Ross & Saxena, 2019). Moreover, most studies that address this topic do so from the perspective of the experience provider (Baker et al., 2016; Katifori et al., 2018; Katifori, Tsitou, et al., 2020; Tsenova et al., 2020; Wilson & Desha, 2016), leaving the perspective of the heritage tourist largely underexplored.

For heritage attractions to effectively harness the craft of storytelling, a guide for its implementation and knowledge on visitors' perceptions are necessary. In other words, the implications of this work are important as they can offer heritage attractions with invaluable insight as to how to effectively utilize storytelling to their advantage. This will allow their visitor to co-create value with them as they engage in processes of meaning and memory making. By meeting the demands of experientially motivated tourists, heritage attractions can regain their competitive edge in the market and set new standards for visitor experiences in heritage tourism. For academia, this work offers a deeper comprehension on the importance of storytelling in heritage tourism settings from the perspective of the visitor.

This data may offer support for future research in the field of tourism in general, including studies on tourist expectations, intentions, and behaviors.

1.3 Research aims, objectives, and questions

Given the lack of research on the implementation of storytelling in heritage tourism settings, as well as on visitor perspectives on storytelling's influence on their heritage experiences, this work has two primary research aims:

- 1) To develop an experimental methodological framework that breaks down heritage storytelling into its various elements.
- 2) To implement and evaluate the developed methodological framework in an experimental setting and assess its influence on the heritage experience from the visitor's perspective.

To achieve these research aims, this work will strive to meet the following research objectives:

- 1) To review the literature and identify the various elements of heritage storytelling, allowing for the elaboration of an experimental methodological framework.
- 2) To build a "storytelling tour" experience based on the identified elements.
- 3) To implement the "storytelling tour" in the service offering of the Islamic Museum of Tavira (located in Tavira, Portugal).
- 4) To assess the influence of the "storytelling tour" on the heritage experience from the perspective of the research participants with the use of qualitative research methods.

With respect to these objectives, the work will seek to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the elements of heritage storytelling?
- 2) How was the storytelling tour received by the participants overall?
- 3) How did storytelling influence their heritage experience at the Islamic Museum of Tavira?
- 4) What are some of the limitations and possible areas of expansion for storytelling in heritage settings?

1.4 Significance

The developed methodological framework will contribute to clarifying storytelling's definition in heritage tourism contexts, as well as assist heritage attractions in identifying the types of storytelling that could be implemented in their experience offering. In turn, this will facilitate the application of storytelling in these settings, allowing heritage attractions to take advantage of the benefits that storytelling has to offer. In addition, this framework could also be adapted and utilized in future studies that explore the implementation of storytelling in heritage tourism experiences.

As previous studies have mainly focused on the experience provider's perspective, the qualitative data regarding participants' perspectives on how storytelling influenced their experience of the Islamic Museum of Tavira will provide valuable insight into how storytelling is received by heritage tourists. This data could serve as the foundation to future studies on tourist expectations, intentions, and behaviours in heritage attractions and museums. Consequently, this will assist attractions in tailoring their storytelling experiences to best satisfy the modern heritage tourist.

1.5 Limitations

Although this work offers a more comprehensive view of storytelling in heritage tourism than what was previously available in the literature, the identified elements presented in the methodological framework are not extensive or exhaustive. Its purpose was simply to serve as an aid in the construction of a "storytelling experience" that could be applied in a heritage tourism setting, such as the Islamic Museum of Tavira. An in-depth review is needed to identify and classify all potential storytelling avenues for heritage attractions. It also does not take into consideration that different heritage attractions and museums will have different service experience designs, and that this may influence how relevant and easy it is to incorporate the identified storytelling elements. For example, a heritage attraction that does not offer guided visits, like the Islamic Museum of Tavira, may find it more difficult to implement some of the suggested elements.

Moreover, the work was completed under constraints that may have influenced the applicability, replicability, and accuracy of results. Due to covid-19 and the many closures

and restrictions that ensued, fieldwork was limited in both the number of times the experience could be repeated and number of participants that could attend. Ideally, the samples utilized in this study would have been individuals who are representative of the tourist population in general (in this case, tourists who visit the Islamic Museum of Tavira at will). However, because of a lack of tourists, university students were selected using convenience sampling. It can be argued that issues concerning the sampling method, the sample size, and the study's scope, limit the applicability of results and justification of any far-reaching conclusions.

In addition, as the study adopted a qualitative and interpretivist approach, it is important to disclaim that the process of coding can never be completely free of the influence of the researcher's analytic preconceptions of the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is suggested that future studies on this topic utilize an experimental approach and quantitative data analysis to infer a cause-and-effect relationship between storytelling and other elements of the tourists' heritage experiences. As this work is focused on the lived experience of storytelling, supporting quantitative studies may corroborate and strengthen the findings of this work.

1.6 Structure of the work

Chapter 1 served as the Introduction to this work. It offered an overview of the relevant background information of the research topic, a clear description of the research problem, and this work's specific research aims, objectives, and questions. Finally, it clarified the work's importance to heritage tourism as an industry and academic discipline, as well as any overarching limitations.

Chapter 2 consists of the work's Literature Review. The purpose of this chapter is to provide context of the research problem at large, introduce and define key themes and concepts, as well as review previous research on the topic. More specifically, works of other authors are explored in detail in relation to themes that are crucial in the comprehension of this thesis, including: co-creation in tourism in general, co-creation in heritage tourism, storytelling, and new museology. Finally, based on this review of the literature, this chapter presents a methodological framework for storytelling in heritage tourism (Table 1).

Chapter 3 elaborates on this work's Methodology. It first offers a description of the research setting, followed by an elaboration of the research design. As part of the research

design, the chapter presents an overview of the “storytelling tour” which was designed and implemented for the purpose of this work (Table 2), which builds on what was presented in Table 1. The chapter also clarifies the sampling method, data collection process, and type of analysis that was used.

Chapter 4 presents the Results of this work. More specifically, it offers the findings of the qualitative analysis of the focus group data and answers the following research questions: *1) How was the storytelling tour received by the participants overall? 2) How did storytelling influence the heritage experience at the Islamic Museum of Tavira? and 3) What are some of the limitations and possible areas of expansion for storytelling in heritage settings?*

Chapter 5 consists of the Discussion, which explains and evaluates the results obtained, as well as compares them with the findings of previous studies. This chapter ultimately serves to make an argument in support of the conclusions made. It begins by offering an interpretation of the results, identifying correlations, patterns, and relationships among the data, and discussing whether these results met expectations. It will then explore the implications of the findings, including what this work has contributed to both theory and practice.

Chapter 6 is the work’s Conclusion. This chapter contains a summary of the main findings, clearly states the limitations of the work, and offers suggestions as to potential avenues for future research. Its purpose is to offer answers to the research questions, allowing the author to take a stance on this topic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Experience Economy

In their seminal work, Pine and Gilmore (1998) introduced a new economic era known as the *Experience Economy*. The tourism industry, like many others, was not immune to this economic shift. The *Experience Economy* is characterized by the rise of a new generation of consumers who “unquestionably desire experiences” (Pine & Gilmore, 1998: 97). Consequently, heritage attractions – long dominated by a ‘curatorial’ strategy – struggled as experientially-motivated tourists became disinterested in traditional heritage attraction or museum settings (Calver & Page, 2013; Chhabra, 2008; Leighton, 2007; Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019). In addition, increased competition between heritage attractions resulted in a challenging marketplace, ultimately leading to attractions adopting the belief that an experiential approach could set them apart from competitors and improve revenues (Calver & Page, 2013; Frost et al., 2020; Leighton, 2007). Heritage sites have thus begun transforming their consumer offering into one that is more hospitable, accessible, and engaging (Calver & Page, 2013; Magnani et al., 2018) by means of co-creation (Chronis, 2005; Frost et al., 2020; Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019).

This approach has allowed some heritage attractions to regain their competitive edge in the market (Leighton, 2007) by improving customer perceived value of their experience (Meng & Cui, 2020; Prebensen et al., 2013; Prebensen et al., 2014; Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Considering the Service Dominant Logic (SDL) paradigm proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004), the success of this new approach may be due to the recognition and understanding of how value is co-created between consumer and provider via a collaborative experience. “With the increased tendency for the tourism product and/or experience to be co-created between tourist and provider, comes a need to better understand what drives these tourists to visit specific sites and what they would like to experience whilst there” (Ghisoiu et al., 2017). Said differently, a deeper comprehension of what type of co-creative experiences tourists desire is needed in tourism and heritage studies.

2.2 Co-creation in tourism

Co-creation can be broadly defined as the process of creation of products or services in which the customer has invested individual resources such as time, effort, or ability (Payne et al., 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019). This process is inherently interactive in nature, as collaborating parties invest their resources to create value (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Frow et al., 2015). Traditionally, value creation has been understood as a process occurring within firms and independently from consumers. The firms' activities were the ultimate determiners of value, while the consumers' role was simply one of consumption (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). However, especially considering recent technological advancements (i.e. social media), the consumer of the twenty-first century is informed, connected, and empowered (Dolan et al., 2019; García Haro et al., 2014; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Tussyadiah & Zach, 2013). This has ultimately transformed the value creation process to one where the consumer is actively involved and “pays according to her utility than according to the company's cost of production” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004: 7). The idea of consumers co-creating value via their interactions with organizations is, therefore, central to the concept of co-creation of experiences in general (Mathis et al., 2016; Prebensen et al., 2013).

Much research has considered the topic of co-creation in the tourism context (Berrada, 2017; Buonincontri et al., 2017; Campos et al., 2016; Mathis et al., 2016; Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019). As recent studies in tourism have focused on the importance of experiences and, more precisely, the role of the tourist in the creation of their own experiences (Prebensen et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2013), the concept of co-creation in this context can be understood as “the sum of psychological events a tourist goes through when contributing actively through physical and/or mental participation in activities and interacting with other subjects in the experience environment” (Campos et al., 2018: 391). It is through these highly subjective and relative cognitive processes that the tourist ultimately creates value (Campos et al., 2016; Larsen, 2007). The concept of ‘value-in-use’ furthers this idea, suggesting that experiential perception is intrinsically determined by the consumer's evaluation of whether or not they are *better off* as a result of using the product or service (Grönroos, 2008, 2011). This has inspired many studies on tourists' ‘perceived value’ and

the real-life consequences of this variable (Calver & Page, 2013; Duman & Mattila, 2005; Meng & Cui, 2020; Prebensen & Xie, 2017).

For example, a study by Duman and Mattila (2005) explored the question of ‘perceived value’ by demonstrating the role of affective factors such as hedonics, control, and novelty. Their findings stressed the importance of hedonics in consumption experiences, as the more pleasurable aspects of the tourism experience were strongly linked to perceived value. In addition, hedonics also emerged as a predictor of future behavior, supporting the idea that consumers who have had pleasurable experiences are more likely to make repeat purchases (Duman & Mattila, 2005). In a study that aimed to understand how tourist revisit intentions are formed, constructs related to co-creation, such as perceived behavioral control, subjective norms and memorability, were determined to be important (Meng & Cui, 2020). Moreover, it was found that perceived value acted as a mediator between experiencescape and memorability and that co-creation behavior was a significant mediator between experiencescape and perceived value (Meng & Cui, 2020). Prebensen and Xie (2017) explored the effects of co-creation on perceived value of consumers’ experiences. The results of this research suggest that tourists generally have a higher perceived value of their experience when they’ve actively participated in the experience (Prebensen & Xie, 2017).

2.3 Co-creation at heritage sites

The concept of co-creation and value creation have also been explored in archaeological and heritage tourism contexts (Frost et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2020; Ghisoiu et al., 2017; Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019; D. Ross & Saxena, 2019; Van Der Linde & Mans, 2015). Heritage can be defined as “what is or may be inherited” (Drummond, 2001: 6) or as how modern society utilizes the inherited past (Di Pietro et al., 2018). It can also be described as an important asset that helps us understand the past, face the present, and shape the future (Di Pietro et al., 2018). For tourism purposes, heritage can “be conceptualized as a product, a marketable commodity, although in reality it is multi-faceted, embodying notions of scholarship, culture and personal identity” (Leighton, 2007: 118). Heritage places can include a wide variety of attractions that make for lucrative tourism opportunities, ranging from small-scale local properties, to large attractions that are central to a destination’s tourism strategy (Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019).

Customers actively co-create their heritage consumption experiences (Minkiewicz et al., 2014). For example, Little et al. (2020) explored the potential of 3D modelling technology as a means of preserving heritage while also allowing for memorable tourism experiences. Findings revealed that 3D scanning effectively simulated a WWII Hanger and Norden bombsight within two millimeters of accuracy. These simulations can then be presented to tourists as Augmented Reality or Virtual Reality experiences that are interactive and authentic (Little et al., 2020). Similarly, a study by Bec et al. (2019) found that integrating technology in immersive heritage contexts has the potential to preserve heritage while enriching the visitor experience and their engagement with history. Another study by Ghisoiu et al. (2017) proposed a conceptual model that aims to reconcile conservation efforts of heritage sites with the delivery of experiences through co-creation. These authors suggest that a co-creative heritage tourism experiences should foster two-way communication between the site and the tourist by 1) co-producing through active participation and physical interaction, 2) personalisation through experience tailoring, employee interaction, and technology, and 3) engagement through emotional and cognitive immersion (Ghisoiu et al., 2017).

2.4 Storytelling

Storytelling is part of human nature (Gottschall, 2012; James & Minnis, 2004; Moscardo, 2020). It seems humans are compelled to tell stories, whether it be during daily activities, at meals, while travelling, or even while daydreaming (Bassano et al., 2019). Storytelling can be viewed as a central component of human existence, as people use stories to facilitate communication (Moscardo, 2020), understand the world around them (Dawson & Sykes, 2018), as well as shape their identities (Bassano et al., 2019; D'Argembeau et al., 2014). Storytelling is a powerful means of engaging audiences (Abma, 2003; Frost et al., 2020; Pounsford, 2007; Sundin et al., 2018). It can be defined as “a two-way interaction, written or oral, between someone telling a story and one or more listeners” (Sundin et al., 2018: 1). Stories are a specific type of narrative that must provoke emotional responses (Moscardo, 2020). They usually tell a sequence of related events for entertainment purposes, including a challenge to the main character(s), the reaction and journey of the character(s) in response to the challenge, as well as some sort of resolution (Moscardo, 2020; Popova, 2015). They also

tend to activate imaginative processes by connecting with people's experiences and emotions (Nielsen, 2017).

Although storytelling has been extensively studied in the disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology, research has just begun exploring its implications in tourism (Moin et al., 2020; Moscardo, 2020). However, an emerging body of knowledge is beginning to demonstrate the relevance of storytelling in the "experience tourism" era of the twenty-first century (Bassano et al., 2019; Moin et al., 2020; Moscardo, 2020; Mossberg et al., 2010; Weiler & Black, 2015). In fact, stories have become a central component to tourism practice, especially in tourist experience design (Moscardo, 2020). At the core of the tourism system where tourist, provider, and community intersect, storytelling is used to co-create tourist experiences (Moscardo, 2020). For example, Abma (2003) found that the process of sharing stories facilitates group connections and encourages more interaction. This may be due to people's ability to connect with stories, as they often contain norms and values that they identify with (Haigh & Hardy, 2011; Kent, 2015; Moscardo, 2020). In their study on heritage and storytelling in wine tourism, authors Frost et al. (2020) found that storytelling was an effective way of engaging visitors and creating a competitive advantage. Similarly, Robiady et al. (2020) found that storytelling techniques had a significant positive effect on customer engagement. Another study by Ross and Saxena (2019) explored the concept of storytelling, but focused on how creative storytelling can generate meaning-making via participative co-creation at heritage sites where tangible remains have been lost. The authors explain that meaningful tourist experiences are first and foremost determined by 1) the mysticism surrounding "lost" heritage, 2) themed activities and 3) creative storytelling (D. Ross & Saxena, 2019).

2.5 New museology

Traditionally, museums were places of scholarly devotion that were primarily focused on object-based displays and material authenticity in curation (Baker et al., 2016). However, the 'new museum' "attempts to flip the traditional 'top-down' approach to curation, transforming both the presentation and appeal of these institutions as well as the changing ways in which museum content is perceived by patrons" (Baker et al., 2016: 370). From the visitor's perspective, traditional museums were often perceived as rigid and lacking interactivity (Dal

Falco & Vassos, 2017). New museums, on the other hand, share power with communities and recognize the co-construction of knowledge between the museum and the visitor (Marstine, 2006). In this way, museums have begun to emphasize ‘experiential learning’ centered on inclusive and pluralistic discourses of memory and narrative (Andermann & Arnold-de Simine, 2012). Visitors can now engage with heritage in a more active way, as they negotiate the meaning of the past and the ways in which cultural narratives and values are legitimized (Smith, 2014). According to Smith (2014: 125):

“Museum collections, heritage sites or other items and places normally identified as heritage are [...] not in and of themselves heritage, but rather cultural tools that are utilised in an active performance of heritage creation in which remembering and memory making occurs. Heritage is a performance intimately tied up with the legitimation of identity, belonging and sense of place, but it is a negotiated process or performance in which heritage meanings or heritage making are constantly made and remade for the needs of the present.”

As visitors become less interested in traditional offerings, museums have begun investing in new methods of visitor engagement (Barron & Leask, 2017). In other words, more people are visiting museums with the expectation of having an entertaining experience (Danks et al., 2007). As the process of meaning-making primarily occurs as patrons visit heritage attractions (Smith, 2014), there is a need to better understand how heritage professionals can tailor their experience to facilitate engagement and, consequently, meaning-making. Meaning-making can be defined as “the process of making sense of experience, of explaining or interpreting the world to ourselves and others” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994: 12). That said, new museums consider elements such as meaning-making, interpretation, and interaction to be central to the modern visitor’s experience; yet, there is little guidance for museums as to how to connect these elements with their museological practices (Nielsen, 2017).

Although storytelling has been long employed by museums, the approach has evolved from one of transmitting an authoritative narrative to offering a multi-faced and interactive experience (Wyman et al., 2011). The new museum is primarily interested in visitors *participating* in its stories. In other words, the goal is to engage the visitors in memorable and emotionally relatable narrative structures. Storytelling is now considered as one of the most important tools for creating meaning, as it can ensure emotional engagement among visitors and staff (Nielsen, 2017). However, stories in and of themselves do not necessarily

create meaning – it is how stories are understood on an unconscious level that will ultimately make them meaningful to the individual. This process is entirely subjective, as the narrative structure stimulates unique feelings and memories for each person (Nielsen, 2017). According to Bedford (2001), storytelling is the ‘real work’ of the museum, as it supports individual interpretation and meaning-making. It is also important to clarify that the process of storytelling is not limited to the stories told by the museum; rather, it includes visitors making up their own stories (Nielsen, 2017).

Chronis (2005) explains that storytelling often involves co-creation between tour guides and tourists, as tourists are constantly filling narrative gaps using their imagination or assigning their own meaning to the story. A tour guide can be traditionally defined as a person who guides groups or individuals through places of interest while interpreting cultural or natural heritage (Weiler & Black, 2015). However, this definition presents the tour guide as a one-way communicator, a presenter, or entertainer. Within the context of the *Experience Economy* (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), tour guides should rather be viewed as *experience-brokers* who are experience-focused and view group tour members as active participants (Weiler & Black, 2015). As such, tours become customized or even personalized, leading to an experience that is enjoyable, memorable, and meaningful (Weiler & Black, 2015). If experience-oriented tourists continue to increase the demand for co-creative tours, tour guides will be best positioned to answer this demand due to their ability to improvise and adapt their communication. Tour guiding thus remains relevant in experience-centered tourism, creating a need within the industry to equip guides with the skills they need to deliver these interactive experiences and meet customer expectations (Weiler & Black, 2015).

2.6 Storytelling heritage experiences: An experimental methodological framework

Drawing from a preliminary review of the literature, the table below (Table 1.) represents a summary of the identified forms of storytelling (which will henceforth be referred to as “storytelling elements”) in heritage experiences, as interpreted by the author. This framework consists of the foundation on which the methodological design of the “storytelling experience” was based. It is referred to here as “experimental” because it is not representative of an exhaustive overview of all possible storytelling elements in heritage experiences. In addition, this methodological framework has never been adopted or tested in previous

studies. This section will explore each of these storytelling elements in detail, clarifying their relevance for heritage attractions that wish to implement storytelling in their experience design.

Storytelling elements	Historical stories	Bec et al., 2019; Frost et al., 2020; Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019; Ross & Saxena, 2019
	Myths, folklore, and legends	Bec et al., 2019; Mossberg et al., 2010; Ross & Saxena, 2019
	Dynamic discussions	Katifori et al., 2020; Ross & Saxena, 2019
	Personal stories and experiences	Bassano et al., 2019; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Hsu et al., 2009; Moscardo, 2017, 2020; Ross & Saxena, 2019
	Themed activities, staged performances, and re-enactments	Everett & Parakoottathil, 2016; Ghisoiu et al., 2017; Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019; Ross & Saxena, 2019
	Visual and digital storytelling	Katifori et al., 2018; Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020; Katifori, Tsitou, et al., 2020; Little et al., 2020; Psomadaki et al., 2019; Wilson & Desha, 2016; Wyman et al., 2011
	Poetry	Kwiatek & Woolner, 2010, 2009

Table 1. Storytelling elements in heritage experiences

2.6.1 *Storytelling using historical stories*

Heritage attractions often possess a unique story which can be packaged into engaging experiences that entice the imagination of visitors. The historical narrative of these places often captures the social and historic life of the local community, evoking an important sense of place identity (Calver & Page, 2013; Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019). In addition, historical stories have also been found to increase visitor brand engagement and loyalty (Dodd, 1995). Historical narratives are especially well received by tourists when they are conveyed by local guides who are familiar with the stories and cultural background, as these stories are viewed as more authentic than those told by an external source (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2017; Mijnheer

& Gamble, 2019). More precisely, telling historical stories can be considered an effective strategy to increase engagement as visitors interpret these stories as being intrinsically and existentially authentic (Calver & Page, 2013; Frost et al., 2020). Storytelling using historical stories can thus be considered a medium through which a site's authenticity can be harnessed and shared with visitors.

2.6.2 Storytelling using myths, folklore, and legends

All religions and cultures have their foundations in powerful narratives that express their central tenets and illuminate their essential elements. These narratives, otherwise known as myths and legends, play an important role in preserving culture (Bassano et al., 2019; Guhathakurta, 2002). Consequently, the experience environment of a tourist destination is intimately tied with that destination's history, legends, stories, folklore, and myths (Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009). According to Bec et al. (2019), there are four categories to heritage presentation, including the 'Contested Heritage' approach. This approach includes the use of unverified stories (i.e. myths and legends) of local heritage to present a subjective or imaginative interpretation (Bec et al., 2019). Legends and myths can be considered an integral part of telling a good story, as they "[make] cultural history become more alive, exciting, relevant and colourful and [ensure] that tourists are not (just) being given a guided tour" (Mossberg et al., 2010: 20). For example, in a study conducted by Ross and Saxena (2019) that explored co-creative storytelling tours in archaeological tourism, findings revealed that the tour guide's story of the region's mystical heritage was perceived as engaging to tourists.

2.6.3 Storytelling using dynamic discussions

As previously mentioned, traditional museums were rigid and lacked interactivity (Dal Falco & Vassos, 2017), while new museums share power with communities and recognize the validity of co-constructed knowledge (Marstine, 2006). New museums emphasize 'experiential learning' that is centered on inclusive and pluralistic discourses of memory and narrative (Andermann & Arnold-de Simine, 2012). Consequently, visitors can now engage with heritage in a more active way, as they negotiate the meaning of the past and the ways in which cultural narratives and values are legitimized (Smith, 2014). Visitors are invited to actively participate in the construction of alternative counter-discourses that either challenge

or run parallel to the dominant authorized heritage discourse (Smith, 2006). In this way, heritage sites or objects can be considered as starting points to conversations that enable visitors' processes of negotiation of meanings and understanding of the past and present (Carman, 2002; D. Ross & Saxena, 2019). In heritage experience contexts, this process is often social in nature (Jafari et al., 2013), meaning that visitors' own perspective-making can be influenced by the perspectives of others as they negotiate meaning amongst themselves in a dynamic and interactive way (Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020).

2.6.4 Storytelling using personal stories and experiences

According to Bedford (2001), the 'real work' of the museum is to tell stories, as this supports individual interpretation and meaning-making. However, the process of storytelling is not limited to the stories told by the museum; rather, it includes visitors making up their own stories (Nielsen, 2017). In a study by Moscardo (2017), it was determined that experience settings that favour opportunities for tourists to enact their own stories likely encourage mindfulness, particularly if those stories provide interaction and active participation. Moreover, when tourists tell their stories to others, this plays a key role in enhancing their tourist experience (Moscardo, 2017a). This discourse, formed by an exchange of personal narratives, can occur between tourists, or between providers and tourists. Results of one qualitative study found that heritage tourism providers frequently told stories about their childhood experiences growing up around archaeological sites, which in turn favoured participative co-creation and enabled a negotiation of meanings (Carman, 2002; D. Ross & Saxena, 2019). In another study that explored brand meaning-making in a museum setting, it was found that sharing stories amongst themselves helped tourists form a connection with one another (Hollenbeck et al., 2008).

2.6.5 Storytelling using themed activities, stages performances, and re-enactments

Historic re-enactments encourage the transformation of memory, history, and personal narrative into a visible leisure performance, where individuals draw on nostalgic symbolism to recollect their past and present lives (Stankova & Vassenska, 2015). Heritage providers, such as tour guides, consist of a crucial component to the visitors' experience, as they play the role of "value facilitator" and "interactive storyteller". More precisely, tour guides can facilitate value co-creation through character-based storytelling and costume. This increases

engagement and helps visitors relate to the people living in that period (Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019). In a study by Ghisoiu et al., (2017) that explored co-creative opportunities in heritage and film tourism, participants showed interest in being involved in activities when visiting sites associated with films or TV series. Younger participants, in particular, were interested in co-creative immersive activities at the heritage film location, including archery, dressing up in costume, cycle tours, boat tours, and overnight camping (Ghisoiu et al., 2017). According to Ross & Saxena (2019), staged performances create a sense of place, evoke emotionality, and foster cultural presence for the visitor. These activities engage visitors' imagination and creative side by blending personal imagination and historical accuracy, and consequently generating a multitude of reactions such as a sense of escape or personal transformation (Everett & Parakootathil, 2016).

2.6.6 Storytelling using visual and digital means

Digital storytelling can be defined as telling stories via interactive media, animation, and enriched Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) elements (Psomadaki et al., 2019). Today, it can be considered as an important tool for competing in the tourism market and conveying knowledge and culture (Bassano et al., 2019). Digital storytelling in cultural heritage contexts has been recognized as a direction that museums and historical sites need to invest in to attract and engage their audiences (Katifori et al., 2018; Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020). Using multimedia supports, the storyteller can now create an immersive and enjoyable environment that allows the visitor to actively participate in the story (Ioannidis et al., 2013; Pujol et al., 2012). Findings of Katifori, Tsitou, et al. (2020) revealed that a storytelling app promoted engagement, learning, and deep reflection in visitors. Moreover, in a study by Bonacini (2019) that explored digital storytelling's impact on heritage communities, it was found that digital storytelling engaged communities to promote their cultural heritage, which in turn favoured partnerships with local heritage institutions.

2.6.7 Storytelling using poetry

Stories can be found in a variety of written and verbal forms, including poetry (Haigh & Hardy, 2011; James & Minnis, 2004). Poetry has long been recognized for its important role in education (Boni, 2017). For example, the philosophers of ancient Greece viewed poetry as an embodiment of experiential learning. In other words, through the creation of poetic

narratives, it is possible to transmit knowledge by cultivating emotion, imagination, and memory in others (Boni, 2017). A project by Kwiatek & Woolner (2009) presented a method for combining poetry into an interactive narrative to enable individuals to find their own journey through the interactive storytelling and provide them with a sense of a story unfolding. Ideally, this would also encourage young participants to write their own poems based on their interactive experience, as well as change their perception of poetry to one that is motivating and appealing (Kwiatek & Woolner, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Setting

The Islamic Museum of Tavira is a small archaeology museum in the town of Tavira, Portugal. It consists of the most recent addition to the Municipal Museum of Tavira, having opened in 2012. The museum displays a diversified archaeological collection from the Islamic era in Portugal, in addition to any temporary exhibits located on the upper level. Visitors can visit the museum by purchasing general admission or a guided tour. Among the many relics, the Tavira Vase is highlighted as one of the museum's more unique pieces due to its rare portrayal of animals and humans in Islamic art.

3.2 Research design

This qualitative field experiment aims to determine how storytelling impacts the heritage experience from the perspective of the tourist. According to Viglia and Dolnicar (2020), field experiments can provide a deeper understanding of tourist experiences. Research has demonstrated the compatibility of field experiments and qualitative methods (Maxwell, 2004; Paluck, 2010; Viglia & Dolnicar, 2020). In fact, it can be argued that “qualitative measurement within a field experiment leads to a better understanding of the causal effect, suggests plausible causal explanations, and uncovers new processes that are invisible from a distance” (Paluck, 2010: 61). Qualitative methods were deemed appropriate for this study, as they allow for the use of small samples and in-depth investigations of topics (Ghisoiu et al., 2017), and are focused on gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of subjects (Markwell & Basche, 1998). In addition, qualitative research accommodates a flexible and experiential way of studying service situations, and is well suited to gather data from dynamic and interactive processes (A. Gilmore & Carson, 1996).

With the goal of discovering the impact of storytelling for tourists taking part in heritage experiences, it is crucial to develop the field experiment with respect to previous research on storytelling in heritage tourism. The first step to developing the experiment was to define exactly what a ‘storytelling experience’ in a heritage tourism could consist of. This led to the development of the theoretical framework for storytelling on which this study is based (see Table 1). The next step concerns how this theoretical model of storytelling can be

effectively utilized and implemented in the service experience offered at the Islamic Museum of Tavira. As guided tours are a significant part of the museum's pre-existing service design (and particularly popular with tourists, community members, and school groups), the field experiment was integrated into the guided tour. This led to the development of a "storytelling tour", which was based around the elements defined in Table 1 and designed in collaboration with one of the museum's tour guides. Some creative liberties and a certain level of flexibility were permitted within the experiment. For example, if a participant asked a question about an item that was not integrated into the designed "storytelling tour", the guide was permitted to answer and interact with participants in an authentic and unscripted way. These kinds of deviations are expected, as the experiment's setting is meant to be reflective of a real service environment where interactions cannot be predicted or controlled. That said, the "storytelling tour" followed the general structure presented in Table 2.

3.3 Sampling

This study utilized convenience sampling, which can be described as the selection of participants who are available and easy to access (Saumure & Given, 2008; Viglia & Dolnicar, 2020). The main disadvantage of this sampling method is that the participants may not actually behave the same way as the people of interest to the study (Viglia & Dolnicar, 2020). For this reason, convenience sampling is sometimes criticized for its lack of transferability or external validity (Saumure & Given, 2008). Ideally, the samples utilized in this study would be individuals who are representative of the "tourist population" in general (i.e., tourists who visit the Islamic Museum of Tavira at will). However, due to a lack of tourists and various closures caused by the covid-19 pandemic, convenience sampling was selected despite its disadvantages. Students from various international programs at the University of Algarve were sampled as they are, in a sense, tourists visiting Portugal. International students are comparable to tourists in their cross-border movements, economic impact, and socio-cultural consequences; therefore, researchers should be encouraged to include them as participants in their tourist studies (Abdullateef & Biodun, 2014). Finally, as all participants were taking part in an international postgraduate program in the same country, they have shared similar life experiences and belong to comparable demographics (Breen, 2006; Wilkinson, 1998).

Tour stops	Storytelling element (see Table 1)	Application	Authors
Stop 1. Museum Reception	Historical story	Introduce the periods of Islamic occupancy of the region. Tell the history of the museum and how it came to be.	Bec et al., 2019; Frost et al., 2020; Mjinheer & Gamble, 2019; Ross & Saxena, 2019
Stop 2. Introduction Movie	Visual and digital storytelling	Play the movie "Islamic Tavira", which visually introduces life in the Islamic Period and offers some historical facts.	Katifori, Tsitou, et al., 2018; Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020; Katifori, Tsitou, et al., 2020; Little et al., 2020; Psomadaki et al., 2019; Wilson & Desha, 2016; Wyman et al., 2011
Stop 3. The Bishop Julianus' Tombstone	Dynamic discussion about the past that promote critical thinking and the exploration of important issues	Use the movie as talking point concerning Portugal's Islamic pass and question the participants regarding their knowledge on this topic. Discussion on how various Portuguese words have Arab origins.	Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020; Ross & Saxena, 2019
Stop 4. The City Wall	Dynamic discussion about the past that promote critical thinking and the exploration of important issues	Use Bishop Julianus' tombstone as a point of discussion on religious tolerance in the past and present.	Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020; Ross & Saxena, 2019
Stop 5. The Tavira Vase	Historical story	Tell the story of the Almohad conquest of Tavira.	Bec et al., 2019; Frost et al., 2020; Mjinheer & Gamble, 2019; Ross & Saxena, 2019
	Dynamic discussion about the past that promote critical thinking and the exploration of important issues	Present the vase and use it as a discussion point concerning its possible function. Give the participants the opportunity to offer their personal interpretations on what they think the vase could have been used for.	Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020; Ross & Saxena, 2019
	Visual and digital storytelling	Introduce the debate on whether the vase should travel to other exhibitions and museums or remain in Tavira. Allow the participants to give their opinion and discuss as a group.	
	Myths, folklore, and legends	Use the television screen to display images representing the possible functions, legends, and symbolic values of the vase. Introduce two main theories of symbolic interpretation: War vs. Marriage. Tell the story of Yamala (the female warrior) and the bridal kidnapping story.	Katifori et al., 2018; Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020; Katifori, Tsitou, et al., 2020; Little et al., 2020; Psomadaki et al., 2019; Wilson & Desha, 2016; Wyman et al., 2011
	Poetry	Tell the legend of Isabella and the pot of basil.	Bec et al., 2019; Mossberg et al., 2010; Ross & Saxena, 2019
Stop 6. The Spindle Needle	Visual and digital storytelling	Read a poem from the Decameron about Isabella and the pot of basil.	Kwiatk & Woolner, 2010, 2009
	Myths, folklore, and legends	Try to make participants guess what the object is. Show images of the "Sleeping Beauty" cartoon fairies as a way of hinting to participants that the object is a spindle needle.	Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020; Katifori, Tsitou, et al., 2020; Little et al., 2020; Psomadaki et al., 2019; Wilson & Desha, 2016; Wyman et al., 2011
Stop 7. The Loaded Die and the Game Pieces	Dynamic discussion about the past that promote critical thinking and the exploration of important issues	Tell the legend of Sleeping Beauty.	Bec et al., 2019; Mossberg et al., 2010; Ross & Saxena, 2019
		Use the loaded dice to talk about gambling and cheating in Tavira's past despite being "haram". Use the game pieces to discuss the question "How old is the concept of recycling?"	Ross & Saxena, 2019(Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020)

Table 2. Storytelling tour

3.4 Data collection

Data was collected using focus group methodology. To achieve data saturation, the experiment (“storytelling tour”) and focus group were carried out on three homogenous groups of participants. The criterion of saturation is widely accepted in qualitative research as the point at which data collection or analysis can be discontinued. This is achieved when the information collected during the research becomes redundant or no new data emerges (Saunders et al., 2018). Although the number of focus groups needed to achieve saturation is highly debated, it is commonly stated that anywhere between three and six focus groups is sufficient for identifying central themes in the data (Coenen et al., 2012; Guest et al., 2016; Hennink et al., 2019). In a study by Guest et al. (2016), more than 80% of themes were discoverable within two to three focus groups, and three focus groups were enough to identify all of the most prevalent themes within the data set. Based on these findings, it was decided that three focus groups (one focus group per group of participants) consisted of an adequate sample size for identifying relevant themes and providing insight on the research question. The focus groups took place off-site after each group’s “storytelling tour” at the Islamic Museum of Tavira had been completed. Focus groups were held at the University of Algarve Campus, as this location is convenient, familiar, and comfortable for students (Breen, 2006; Elwood & Martin, 2000; Tynan & Drayton, 1988).

Focus groups are defined as informal discussions of topics among a group of selected participants which is directed by a moderator (Beck et al., 1986; Wilkinson, 1998). Data is generated and collected as the group interacts (Morgan, 1997). Focus group methodology was selected for this study due to its ability in allowing a more comprehensive understanding of people’s views (Wilkinson, 1998). Focus group discussions often utilize less structured and open-ended questions as a means of generating information on participants’ opinions, attitudes, and perceptions (A. Gilmore & Carson, 1996). The ideal focus group size can vary between four and twelve participants (Tang & Davis, 1995). According to Tynan & Drayton (1988), focus groups should last approximately one to two hours. The use of focus groups has many advantages, such as being inexpensive, fast, and easy to run (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). However, important disadvantages, like limited reliability and increased probability for bias, have also been associated with the use of focus groups (Breen, 2006).

The focus group guide (Appendix 1) utilized in this study was comprised of eight semi-structured and open-ended questions. Group sizes varied between six and eight (mainly due to constraints related to covid-19 regulations) and each focus group lasted approximately 1.5-2 hours. Focus groups were recorded using the SONY ICD-PX370 digital dictation machine. All participants signed a consent form (see Appendix 2) consenting to the data collection process described in this work.

Certain controls were maintained during the data collection process to maximize consistency between groups. During the field experiment, these included: all groups containing a similar number of participants (between six and eight) with similar profiles (all international students studying in Portugal), all groups participating in the same tour (as outlined in Table. X), and all three tours being given by the same tour guide. During the focus groups, controls included: the use of the same focus group guide and questions, as well as the use of the same moderator. As is common with studies that pertain to the human experience and accommodate nonlinear causality, multiple factors could not be controlled and may influence the validity and replicability of results (motives, energy levels, past social interactions, etc.) (Stiles, 1993). These factors are not only relevant to the study's participants, but also to the tour guide and the moderator. Regardless, the purpose of this research is not to confirm or deny the existence of a causal relationship between storytelling and the many components which form the tourist experience; rather, it is to explore how storytelling impacts tourists' relationship with visited heritage attractions through a subjective examination of their lived experiences.

3.5 Data analysis

Focus groups will be transcribed manually and analyzed using NVivo 12. NVivo is one of the most used software for analyzing text information in qualitative research (Chen et al., 2020). A thematic analysis was carried out on the data as a means of identifying relevant themes that help explain storytelling's influence on the heritage experience from the perspective of the tourist. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 6), "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data". The process of conducting a thematic analysis involves a number of decisions on behalf of the researcher that must be made explicit to the reader, including: how themes were determined and

identified (inductively or theoretically), the scope of the analysis on the data set, the level of themes identified (latent or semantic), and the epistemology that informed how meaning was theorized (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis, although not a linear process, can be summarized as having six steps: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching (or identifying) themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This type of thematic analysis was later coined “*reflexive TA*” (Braun & Clarke, 2019, emphasis in original: 13), highlighting the researcher’s role in the production of knowledge and the importance of transparency regarding the researcher’s theoretical assumptions.

Thematic analysis is compatible with the values of a qualitative paradigm that reflects the subjectivity and engagement of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In this study, the interpretivist paradigm was adopted as it allows for the exploration of embedded meaning in the data by adopting the perspective of the subject (Frost et al., 2020). However, it should be stressed that themes are not understood as passive agents that are “embedded” in the data waiting to be discovered; rather, it is recognized that meaning is actively assigned by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ely et al., 1997). Themes were determined according to what data could be unified in an intentional way to help answer the research question based on the judgement of the researcher in identifying patterns of shared meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). Themes were identified inductively, as the analysis was not driven by a pre-existing coding frame. However, it is important to disclaim that the process of coding can never be completely free of the influence of the researcher’s analytic preconceptions of the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, the focus group guide created for this study was inherently influenced by the researcher’s prior research on the topic of storytelling in heritage. As such, some questions asked to participants were inextricably linked to themes and concepts previously identified in the literature. For instance, the question concerning participants’ most memorable moment(s) of the experience at the museum (Question #5) was inspired by the concept of “memorability” (see Campos et al., 2016; Meng & Cui, 2020; Zatori et al., 2018). The scope of analysis included the entire data set (three focus groups). Themes were identified at the latent level, meaning that the themes attempt to underline certain ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations using an interpretative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. RESULTS

The analysis provided insight into the following questions: 1) *How was the storytelling tour received by the participants overall?* 2) *How did storytelling influence the visitor's heritage experience at the Islamic Museum of Tavira?* and 3) *What are some of the limitations and possible areas of expansion for storytelling in heritage settings?* The first question is relevant to how heritage tourists perceive storytelling based on their expectations when visiting heritage attractions and museums. These expectations open the door to a discussion surrounding 'new museology', in contrast with traditional museology, and the role of storytelling in 'new' museums (Andermann & Arnold-de Simine, 2012; Baker et al., 2016; McCall & Gray, 2014; M. Ross, 2015; Stam, 1993). The second question directly responds to the primary curiosity that underpins this work: learning the influence of storytelling on heritage experiences from the perspective of the tourist. In other words, what makes a 'storytelling experience' any different from a traditional heritage experience? What are the outcomes of a storytelling experience for the heritage tourist and, consequently, the provider? Finally, the last section addresses the areas where participants felt that the storytelling could have been taken a step further and the reasons behind these feelings. This may provide crucial information to heritage providers regarding best practices for implementing storytelling in their experience facilitation.

4.1 General reception of the storytelling experience

Overall, the storytelling tour was positively received by most participants. Although the focus group questions did not explicitly ask participants to recall moments of storytelling, or specific stories told throughout the tour, many organically mentioned the guide's storytelling abilities and/or certain stories as a highlight of their visit. A few participants stated that the museum was small and had few exhibits, but the storytelling made the museum worth visiting. For example, participant FG1H said:

“[The guide] had all the time a story behind something, that is really great, and I've seen so many museums, but I could say that this museum was a really small museum, with not much to see, but the way that she tells the story [...] it's so interesting and people love to visit it.”

Participant FG1B furthered this idea. They commented that, due to the museum's small size, they could imagine themselves being able to visit all the exhibits in ten minutes.

However, with the tour guide's storytelling incorporated into the visit, they could easily see the tour lasting between one and three hours. This participant continued to explain that the guide's excitement led to others becoming excited, which encouraged increased interaction amongst the group and made the storytelling more effective. In fact, many participants mentioned that the tour guide's passion and excitement when telling the stories played a role in how the storytelling was received. For example, participant FG3F contrasted the storytelling experience with a more traditional museum experience using an audio-guide:

“For me, it's very difficult to get involved in the story with an audio-guide, so I really prefer when there is someone explaining [things] to me, and it also depends on how the person is, but I felt that [the tour guide] was very passionate about [their] job, [...] and I like when people transmit this.”

That said, it is likely that the medium of storytelling influences how the storytelling experience is received and evaluated by the visitor. With an audio-guide, visitors may struggle to get emotionally invested in the storytelling experience due to a lack of engagement. In this case, the tour guide was able to emotionally engage this participant by transmitting their passion for their work as they explained the exhibits and told stories.

Some participants expressed surprised at the presence and preponderance of stories in the museum visit. It is possible that individuals who have not yet visited many 'new museums', or that still expect traditional learning experiences in museums, feel surprised when they are asked to engage with and participate in narratives surrounding heritage and archaeology. In an interaction between two participants discussing the bridal kidnapping story [Stop 5], this element of surprise becomes evident. As participant FG2A reflected on the emotions the bride in the story must have felt as she was being kidnapped, participant FG2E added:

“Yes, [...] I think I felt the same. It's a [discovery], no? [...] I was surprised to discover this[.] When you go to a museum and [have the] interpretation about the vase, [...] you don't expect to get this kind of information. It was interesting.”

Participant FG2G contrasted the traditional approach of museums with the more engaging approach of storytelling:

“I think the guide was perfect because she tried to engage us with storytelling, [...] usually history is not interesting for everyone [...] but, it is the story that makes it interesting.”

FG2G continued their explanation by stating how many heritage places around the world are in ruins, yet widely visited due to a story or legend surrounding the site. Therefore, perceived value of heritage sites is not only determined by the presence or quality of material heritage, but by the immaterial heritage that surrounds these places.

4.2 Influence of storytelling on the heritage experience

In response to the primary research question “*How does storytelling influence the heritage experience from the tourist’s perspective?*”, three central themes were identified: Emotional engagement, Imagination, and Memorability.

4.2.1 Emotional engagement

Stories are fundamental to the connections visitors create with museum exhibits or heritage places. As stated by FG1D, forming a connection with an object, especially one that is otherwise mundane, is the result of being engaged with a story:

“Like you were asking before ‘Do you have a personal connection, do you feel connected with the items?’, many of which are just cooking utensils, and we look at them today and we don’t feel anything, [...] but if there’s a story behind it, [...] then it makes it more engaging, and you are interested[.]”

The data analysis revealed that emotional engagement through storytelling can be the result of 1) human empathy (i.e., being able to ‘experience the feelings or emotions of others’ or ‘tap into fundamental human values’), or 2) personal connections (i.e., being able to create links to one’s own life, identity, or culture). For FG2A, this engagement was the result of their empathy towards the main character of the bridal kidnapping story [Stop 5]. The participant explained:

“I still have that in my mind, [...] maybe the bride [...] was thinking [...] she would marry someone else, and someone else [was] stealing her, and she would be at night with someone else, and I was just thinking about that...”

The participant is using their ability to relate to the kidnapped bride and how the bride must have felt during that event. In this case, FG2A imagined that the bride would have felt scared and uneasy faced with the thought of having to ‘marry someone else’ and ‘be at night with someone else’. This same participant also felt emotionally engaged with the story of Isabella [Stop 5]:

“I think I connected to the story of Isabella[.] How [...] her [brothers] killed her love, and maybe how she was feeling without her love. [...] I’m in love, so I can feel, you know, [...] how it’s impossible to live without your love.”

The participant explained her ability to empathize with the grief that the protagonist, Isabella, must have felt when she discovered her love was dead. They clarify that, because they themselves are in love, they know how it is ‘impossible to live without your love’. The data reveals this tendency for participants to ‘put themselves in the shoes’ of the protagonists of the stories that were told.

However, this aspect of emotional connection based on empathetic reactions is not only true in terms of listeners experiencing and understanding the feelings of protagonists, but also empathizing with the world at large and the ‘bigger-picture’ issues that touch on human values and morality. Referring to the discussion of the possible symbolic interpretations of the Tavira Vase [Stop 5], participant FG3F said:

“I really liked the part [...] where she was giving us the meaning of the animals, for example, or the meaning of the plant[.] This symbolism that, I think, in humanity, we lost a little bit, so we don’t know anymore the meanings of natural elements. [...] That was my favorite part [...] that I’m gonna keep with me.”

In other words, the emotional engagement experienced by FG3F, in response to this storytelling element, was the result of their feeling that humanity had lost this understanding of the symbolism behind natural elements. The participant was, in a sense, mourning a time that they themselves had never experienced – a time where this knowledge of the natural world was more commonplace. This extract speaks to the values FG3F believes should be important to humanity overall (in this case, having a connection with nature).

Similarly, participant FG3D mentioned how the story about religious tolerance at the Bishop Julianus’ Tombstone [Stop3] gave her hope for world peace despite religious conflict:

“I think for me, my favourite part of the museum was the tombstone, because it was really nice to know that in the past [...] Muslims and Christians [...] coexisted, and [...] each religion had so much respect for each other[.] [They were] inclined to believe that we’re humans first, before whatever we choose to worship, or however we choose to worship God, so I really like the fact that it was something that was allowed, and I’m really hoping [...], right now, with the situation of the world, [that our] world [becomes] more like that.”

Again, the storytelling here acted as a gateway for the participant to form a connection between themselves and the exhibit based on their own values and moral code. This sheds light on how participants think the world *should be*, based on what is important to them.

As previously mentioned, emotional engagement can also be a result of visitors having an emotional response to exhibits and/or the stories due to a personal connection (a link to one's own life, identity, or culture). It is worth repeating here that, in part, stories can be curated and offered by the provider; however, the role of "the storyteller" can never be associated solely with the provider. This is because, as stories are told, listeners become active storytellers as they fill narrative gaps and associate their own meanings to the story. This is how the listener will begin to form a personal connection with an exhibit or place, as the stories they tell themselves will be more relevant and meaningful to them. An extract from participant FG3B provides an example of how storytelling led to the formation of a personal connection based on a childhood memory, which resulted in emotional and mental engagement during the presentation of the spindle [Stop 6]:

"My childhood had a lady in school who used to make clothes like that, but [...] seeing a piece of [the] spindle, I don't think that I ever saw it, so [it] was a good thing, and a good experience[.] I think the spindle [...] [and] the story behind [it], [...] it's going to stick."

In this case, the participant constructed their own narrative surrounding the spindle based on a woman they once knew in their childhood. These narrative gaps can also be filled as visitors draw links between the exhibits and stories with their own culture and home countries, as experienced by FG1A:

"I also would like to talk about the pot. [...] You think that it carries no meaning, but when [...] we were [listening] to the explanation, I got to know that it [played] a significant role in [their] life [...], especially for weddings, happiness, and other stuff[.] We have a lot of these things in my country, so when I saw it, I thought [...] 'This is something special'."

Here, participant FG1A was able to emotionally engage with the Tavira Vase [Stop 5] due to a personal connection that they formed because of its similarity with other objects that they have in their home country. In turn, this facilitated the participant's meaning-making, allowing them to interpret the object as 'something special'. This same sentiment was shared by FG2C regarding a clay plate in the museum [not included in the storytelling tour]:

“For me, [...] because I saw [...] there’s [...] this kind of clay thing, that we still use in [home country] nowadays, I was like ‘Oh, this was like here, like, years ago!’, and we still use it for maybe different reasons, and we can use this, for example, to gather as a family, and that was very touching for me, because [...] I thought that it’s quite new, but it was [...] very antique, and I was [...] very shocked, like ‘Oh, it was there since that time!’”

This extract provides an example of an instance where the story was not controlled by the provider or formally integrated in the storytelling tour, yet it still impacted the heritage experience in important ways. FG2C formed a personal connection with the clay plate because of the story *they told themselves* about that object – in this case, a story about gathering as a family and what that means to them. The participant remarks on the surprise they felt when realizing this plate was used in the past, especially because it was an item that their family currently utilizes during family gatherings. They describe this realization as both ‘touching’ and ‘shocking’, as they connected to elements of their own culture and identity that existed in the past.

4.2.2 *Imagination*

When participants spoke of storytelling, they often spoke about imagination. In some cases, this imaginative experience allowed participants to reflect on the past and feel more engaged with the history that was being shared by the tour guide. For example, when asked about their most engaging moment in the visit, participant FG1G mentions a particular moment when they used their imagination:

“I think [...] the most engaged moment was the part that she explained about the pot and [the] different characters[,] [and how] each of them are placed for a special meaning, and the way that she explained that[,] I felt really engaged in the story and the history[,] It was like being in the past and imagining.”

Here, FG1G referred to the discussion of the possible symbolic interpretations of the decorative figurines that adorn the rim of the Tavira Vase [Stop 5]. The participant highlighted that the story allowed them to imagine these characters existing in the past, which led to feeling a sense of engagement. Similarly, participant FG2B decided to refer to this same moment of the visit:

“The moment [with] the [most] engagement was about the [description of] the pot, [...] [with] the missing part, [...] maybe there could be a jewellery box, or something,

as a gift, because the whole story was [about] prospering, good health, [...] the music and festivals, happiness, [and] food and bread[.] [That's] why I think [...] I was more engaged, because [we had] the space to think and talk.”

In this extract, the participant is speaking about the missing figurine from the vase. Using their imagination, they tried to guess what the missing figurine could have been. In continuation with the symbolic interpretation of the vase as a wedding present, the participant postulated that the missing figurine could have been a jewellery box. In their opinion, a jewellery box would make sense in the narrative of a wedding, as it could represent a gift. The participant further mentioned that the moment was engaging due to the space that was given to the group to use their imagination and have discussions. As traditional museum experiences typically present information to the visitor in a one-directional and non-negotiable way, the suggestion here could be that storytelling increases engagement by making the visitor an active participant that can contribute to the creation of their own heritage experiences.

Unlike participant FG2B, who spoke of the wedding scene, participant FG3A seemed to prefer the other possible symbolic interpretation of the vase, which is that the figurines are taking part in a war scene:

“I was rooting for [...] Yamala. [...] I was hoping that she [was] a fighter, [in] the first story. I was really hoping that [...] she [was] like [...] one of the greatest fighters in the army, and you know, she [was] leading her own platoon and stuff[.]”

As explained by the tour guide, one possible interpretation for the female figurine is that it represents Yamala, who once was a female warrior. Participant FG3A used their imagination to envision a narrative that they find the most exciting. In their case, this narrative is that the vase tells the story of Yamala – one of the greatest fighters. The takeaway message here is not that one story is more effective than another, rather that storytelling allows for varied interpretations of the past and, consequently, individual meaning-making. Using imagination, visitors engage with a version of the past that resonates with them and makes sense for them in the present. Visitors may have more engaging heritage experiences via this process of individual narrative construction using imagination.

Another common occurrence in the data is this reference to a ‘child-like imagination’ or ‘feeling like a kid’ when speaking about storytelling. In other words, many participants

suggested that the storytelling led them to have an imaginative response that evoked nostalgia or a memory of being a child. This finding is not surprising, as the use of narrative is a widespread tool in children's learning (from children's books, movies, tv shows, plays, etc.) and learning in general. In the focus group, as participants discussed the tour guide's storytelling abilities, participant FG3F commented:

“Sometimes I felt like a kid, and I [liked] it when they [explained] in a very simple way[.]”

Said differently, as humans, we have been accustomed to learning through narratives since childhood. In heritage settings, it may be beneficial to employ storytelling to tap into this natural human instinct to learn using narrative and individual meaning-making. This process of learning via imaginative engagement may lead to a more impactful connection with heritage:

“I [liked] this impact, with [the] old and [...] big wall[.] [With] my child imagination, I imagined the worker that [built] this wall.” (FG3E)

Participant FG3E mentions the impact they felt when they saw the City Wall [Stop 4] and imagined the workers who had built this wall. This participant created their own narrative using their imagination to engage with the past. This is an example of an imaginative response that resulted from the participant's own storytelling and meaning-making, rather than the storytelling of the tour guide in the context of the storytelling tour.

4.2.3 *Memorability*

When asked about their most memorable moment(s) of the storytelling tour, the analysis revealed that many participants thought they would remember an exhibit because of the story related to it. In other words, what was *perceived as memorable* by most participants was not the heritage objects or places themselves, but the mental process of meaning-making that was fueled by the stories told (by both the ‘provider’ to the ‘listener’ and the ‘listener’ to themselves or others in the group). For example, participant FG1B explained that the story about the bridal kidnapping [Stop 5] was memorable because they thought it would be amusing to have a bridal kidnapping ceremony in their own wedding:

“Some story [the tour guide] told me [about the bridal kidnapping.] I think this type of story is funny, and I would tell my friend, like ‘Yeah, someone [is] happy to kidnap me!’[.] [It’s] fun, [...] maybe when I marry, I [will] also use this type of thing[.]”

In this case, the participant utilized the story told by the tour guide as a foundation to the story they told themselves via individual meaning-making. More specifically, the participant used their imagination to picture a bridal kidnapping in the context of their own life, which helped them form an emotional connection to the story. As a result, the moment was perceived as memorable. This extract, therefore, suggests possible relationships between the themes of *Emotional engagement*, *Imagination*, and *Memorability*. In other words, a combination of being emotionally engaged and using their imagination may lead to perceived memorability from the perspective of the tourist.

Participant FG3A explained that one of their most memorable moments would be the loaded die [Stop 7] because of how it reminded them of a childhood memory of cheating at board games:

“The other thing that I really liked was this little fact that she said that there was this die, and [...] it was rigged to always fall on one number[.] [It] just made [me] connect to the times that we have tried cheating when we have played board games, [...] if I had that die, [...] probably I would be winning everything[.] I [will] remember that die, also.”

Again, a possible overlap between themes becomes evident here, as the participant revealed that emotional engagement, based on a personal connection with the die was the precursor to the die being perceived as memorable. This possible link between *Emotional engagement* and *Memorability* is further explained by FG2C:

“[If] I [go] back to [my home country] and sit with my friends or my family, [...] I will be like ‘Oh, you know what? This [clay] plate, I saw it in Tavira once, and there’s like, other stuff [...] related to the Islamic civilization in Tavira, in Portugal!”, and I will just have this conversation with them. So, basically, what’s memorable is everything that I’m related to[.] [This] is the main point for me, if I will remember something or not, it’s how [...] I’m attached to that thing, and since I’m attached to the history behind the vase and the plate, I think these two things I will remember the most about the museum.”

FG2C explained that a personal connection with the objects – which in this case was the result of similar objects being found in their home country, and pre-existing memories of

family and friends surrounding those objects – made them feel ‘attached’ or ‘related’ to them. Consequently, they felt as though they would remember those objects the most from the storytelling experience. Moreover, multiple participants mentioned this desire expressed by FG2C to share the story with others. For example, participant FG3D explained that they were excited to share their most memorable moment – Bishop Julianus’ tombstone [Stop 3] – with their friends:

“Well, for me it’s the part that [I learned] the bishop was [...] buried [in] the Muslim [cemetery], [...] that is forever going to live with me, it’s something I can’t wait to [...] share with my friends, like ‘Oh my gosh, did you know this? Did you know this?’, it’s like ‘Wow’.”

Perceived memorability may leave participants with the desire to share the moment with others; however, sharing in storytelling experiences as a group may, in turn, lead to moments that are perceived as memorable. In other words, authentic inter-visitor storytelling and learning experiences may lead to memorable moments for individual visitors. For example, following on what was shared by FG2C, participant FG2E added that their most memorable moment was a shared group experience looking at this clay plate [not included in the storytelling tour]:

“Yeah, for me [it] was this experience [that] we [shared], looking at this plate[.] I think [...] visiting museums [is] so interesting because we relate with our customs and our history[.] [At the] same time [that] I saw the plate, and [FG2C] told me ‘Oh, we have some [like] that, and we eat together’, and [it] touched me a lot because... [it’s] hard to explain[.]”

This extract provides an example of a storytelling experience created by visitors in a group setting. This level of storytelling is completely outside the realm of control of the provider. These experiences are authentic moments between visitors, as one visitor tells a story to another or many others in the group. As such, visitors share in their individual meaning-making processes, and potentially modify or adapt their own understanding of heritage objects in response to what is shared by others in the group. For FG2E, this process led her to relate with heritage in a new way, and this evoked an emotional response that they found hard to explain.

4.3 Considerations for storytelling in heritage experiences

4.3.1 Authenticity

Many participants expressed that they would have preferred the storytelling experience be integrated with the town of Tavira, rather than being solely in the museum. Participants felt this way for many reasons, including wanting to better understand the influence of the past on the present, wanting to physically immerse themselves in the history of the town, and wanting to build a connection with the local culture. Overall, the analysis suggests that this integration of heritage storytelling with the physical places in which the stories occur may heighten visitors' emotional responses and *perceived authenticity* of the overall experience.

This idea of wanting to understand the influence of the past on the present was prevalent in the data. Participants said that they were interested in knowing how the past shaped the present day, from architecture, to language, to traditions. For example, when asked about their expectations, participant FG1D explained:

“I was expecting to learn a lot about the influence of this Islamic time period on Portuguese culture and how it [...] influenced the culture and life of people, and then what remains, why it remains, so I was [...] curious also, to learn more about this history part[.]”

In other words, FG1D felt as though the storytelling in the visit could have been improved in the way it offered insight on how the area's Islamic past influenced the town and the culture of Tavira in the present day.

Participants also mentioned that the storytelling could have been more effective in a physically immersive experience that is integrated with the town. Referring to the introduction movie [Stop 2], which visually represented how some areas of the town once looked with its Islamic architecture, participant FG1C explained:

“[Maybe] this aspect about the architecture, [...] would be easier to understand for people if [the visit] would be dispersed within the town, so you are where the entrance to the wall was, and there is [...] somebody that brings you there, and tells you the story there, looking at the place, it would have a different feeling, I think, than being in a small room watching a video.”

This extract suggests that being told a story while physically situated in the location in which the story itself took place would ‘have a different feeling’ than simply watching a

video. Said differently, participating in a storytelling experience while physically located in relevant historical places may have a stronger emotional impact on visitors by evoking more authentic feelings. This is further elaborated by participant FG2G:

“I think the visit of [the] museum should be in two [parts], for example, the first part is going into the [museum to] start watching and gaining some [of the] stories and information, then [the second part is] coming out and [touching] the real city[.] I think, by walking around the city, [...] it could be more interesting[.]”

This idea of ‘touching the real city’ relates to this concept of authenticity and the desire of participants to have authentic experiences. This ties into the final reason participants expressed wanting to have the storytelling experience integrated in the town, which was wanting to form a connection with the town’s cultural heritage:

“[I wanted] more [situations] containing intangible heritage, because I think that [this] connection [...] with the local city, [...] there is this connection that, and I don’t know, [...] it’s more beautiful [...] than [being a] simple tourist[.] [It has] more impact [on our emotions.]” (FG3E)

According to participant FG3E, incorporating the experience in the town would help visitors establish a connection with the town’s intangible heritage and, consequently, foster a sense of ‘being a local’. In this way, the experience would dismantle typical barriers normally faced by ‘simple tourists’ and allow visitors to feel a stronger emotional impact.

4.3.2 *Participation*

The analysis revealed that participants are interested in engaging with heritage places and objects in more modern and interactive ways, including through digital technologies. Many participants expressed that the use of technology and multimedia supports could make the experience more engaging, particularly when learning about history and archeology. Although storytelling was positively received overall, some data suggested that the medium through which storytelling is delivered plays a crucial role in determining effectiveness. The preferred medium can vary depending on visitors’ personal preferences; for example, one participant mentioned that they preferred learning via interaction with another person, such as a tour guide. However, there is a general tendency in the data revealing the need for more technologically enhanced storytelling. For example, participant FG1H explained the benefit

of 3D technology in facilitating engagement through visual storytelling, particularly in regard to presenting the vase [Stop 5]:

“I think they could use technology[.] [There] was nothing really engaging in the museum, except [...] for [...] the guide [...]. [They] could use, I don’t know, audio, [or] they could use the 3D stuff for showing [...] the vase[.]”

There is also this idea of technology facilitating learning about history and archaeology and, consequently, fostering a connection with exhibits. FG2C stated:

“I think it’s good that we can use [the] technology [...] that we have nowadays to experience [...] the historical part[.] [For] instance, we have [...] the VR glasses, [and] they are more engaging to know more about the historical parts and archaeology. I think it’s better to have this connection with technology to know more about the museum.”

In addition to digital technologies, participant FG3F mentioned that the use of interactive group activities could enhance the storytelling experience. This participant specifically suggested role play as a way of increasing visitor engagement:

“[...] it would be very cool that during the explanation [of the] characteristics that were in the object, [maybe there was] like a role play, [or] something like that? [...] Yes, I love this innovation [...] and [getting] really involved in the characters [...].”

As tourists increasingly seek experiences that necessitate their active participation, it is not surprising that the data analysis revealed that storytelling techniques must consider active participation as a key factor in its successful implementation. For the heritage provider, this means using storytelling in a way that fosters two-way interactions, varied and flexible interpretations of the past, as well as opportunities for independent thinking and participation. In this way, storytelling may provide visitors with unforgettably engaging experiences.

5. DISCUSSION

To summarize, results found that the storytelling tour was positively received by most participants. Three central themes were identified regarding storytelling's influence on the heritage experience from the perspective of the visitor, specifically: emotional engagement, imagination, and memorability. In addition, participants highlighted that authenticity and participation were important to consider when designing and facilitating storytelling experiences in heritage settings. The following chapter will offer an interpretation of these results, identify correlations, patterns, and relationships among the data, and discuss whether these results met expectations and how they compare with the results of other studies. It will also explore the implications of the findings, including what this work has contributed to both theory and practice.

5.1 Tourist perceptions and expectations of heritage storytelling

The first research question aimed to understand tourist's perception of storytelling based on their expectations when visiting heritage attractions and museums. In general, participants responded positively to the storytelling tour and often contrasted it with traditional museum experiences to highlight what they appreciated most about the tour. These findings open the door to a discussion surrounding 'new museology' and the role of storytelling in 'new' museums (Andermann & Arnold-de Simine, 2012; Baker et al., 2016; McCall & Gray, 2014; Ross, 2015; Stam, 1993).

Participants expressed surprise at the preponderance of stories in the visit. This reaction may be because many may not be used to storytelling experiences in heritage tourism settings. In other words, visitors are accustomed to traditional museum offerings that view them as recipients of an authorized heritage discourse (Smith, 2006), rather than as co-creators that can propose counter discourses and offer their own knowledge and interpretations on the subject matter. However, research in new museology is demonstrating that the tour guide's role is no longer one of transmission of a single authorized narrative; rather, it is one of telling stories and inviting others to share stories (Bryon, 2012; Chronis, 2005; Overend, 2012; Weiler & Black, 2015).

Moreover, findings demonstrated that stories engaged participants, leading to a higher perceived value of the experience. Unlike what was widely believed by heritage professionals

following traditional museological practices, visitor perceived value is not only determined by the presence or quality of the material heritage, but by the immaterial heritage that surrounds these places:

“In other words, the core value proposition is the process of engaging with the past that offers individuals a chance to make sense of the [heritage] site and situate it within their worldviews. This approach thus arguably shifts the attention away from an interaction with the actual physical fabric towards an immersive process of creative sense-making.” (Ross & Saxena, 2019: 4)

This sentiment truly underpins the premise behind ‘new museology’, as the perceived value of the experience becomes less dependent on objects and more dependent on meaning-making and experiential learning (Baker et al., 2016). This engagement was also a consequence of the tour guide’s energy, passion, and knowledge, and this played a significant role in how the storytelling was received. In a study by Bryon (2012), guide engagement, enthusiasm, and passion were assessed as crucial factors by guides and organizations. Bryon (2012) explains, however, that knowledge is not as important as interpretation. In fact, as tourists become increasingly inquisitive, guides need to adapt by becoming more interpretative and creative (Reisinger & Steiner, 2008). Therefore, results of this study corroborate the importance of the guide’s interpretative and creative skills, particularly highlighting storytelling as a successful tool for increasing visitor engagement in heritage tourism settings.

5.2 Tourist responses to heritage storytelling

The data analysis revealed that emotional engagement through storytelling can be the result of 1) human empathy (i.e., being able to ‘experience the feelings or emotions of others’ or ‘tap into fundamental human values’), or 2) personal connections (i.e., being able to create links to one’s own life, identity, or culture). These findings are similar to the findings of others. For example, a study by Baker et al. (2016) suggested that curators are increasingly designing exhibitions that privilege narratives, encouraging visitors’ personal engagement with stories that are based on or resonate with common experiences. In addition, Wood (2014) found that learning through narrative (i.e. storytelling) was a significant way to increase students’ imagination and empathy. Similarly, Bedford (2001) examined how stories form personal connections between visitors and museum content. The research concluded

that stories encourage personal reflection and public discussions, as well as stimulate our human ability to feel empathy for others (Bedford, 2001).

These results are not surprising, as various scholars have pointed out that engagement in certain experiences contributes to the formation of personal meaning (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Nina Katrine Prebensen & Foss, 2011; Zatori et al., 2018). In fact, data is increasingly demonstrating that museums and heritage sites are places where people go to be emotional (Smith, 2014). Therefore, results of this work corroborate the findings of previous researchers, strengthening the idea that museums and heritage attractions must aim to prioritize visitors' affective responses in their experience design. Academics, on the other hand, must continue to explore how this may facilitate or impede visitor engagement (Smith, 2014). For example, a study by Celsi & Olson (1988) found that interest in objects, activities or situations is more likely when they are perceived as being self-relevant to the individual. In this case, managers and academics alike should pursue the question of how to make content more relevant to visitors using storytelling and, consequently, promote affective responses.

Participants also mentioned how storytelling stimulated their imagination. In some cases, this imaginative experience allowed them to reflect on the past and feel more engaged with the history being shared. These findings are aligned with those of other studies. According to Wood (2014), storytelling stimulates students' imaginations. More specifically, it was found that historical stories stimulate students' historical imagination, which in turn facilitates learning (Wood, 2014). Historical imagination can be defined as the "creative capacity to envisage possibilities of engaging with the past" (Wood, 2010: 55). Said differently, students can engage their historical imagination by reflecting on stories or narratives from the past. By doing so, they identify things of value to bring into the present, and consider how these might be translated into their current context (Wood, 2014).

This link between storytelling and imagination has been well established in the literature (Derrien & Stokowski, 2020; VanSledright & Brophy, 2016; Wood, 2010; Wood, 2014). In tourism experiences, imagination is considered a central component, as "tourism involves the human capacity to imagine or to enter into the imaginings of others" (Salazar & Graburn, 2014: 1). Therefore, the findings of this work met the expectations of the author. However,

what is interesting to highlight is the relationship between the themes of emotional engagement (or, more specifically, empathy) and imagination. Imagination can be understood as a precursor to feeling empathy, as feeling empathetic towards someone necessitates imagining oneself in the situation of that person. For example, for FG2A to empathize with the feelings of the kidnapped bride, they had to imagine themselves in the bride's situation and how they would feel. Consequently, it can be concluded that storytelling stimulated visitors' emotional engagement and imagination, and that a relationship between these themes is likely to exist.

Lastly, many participants said they found exhibits memorable because of the stories related to them. Said differently, what was *perceived as memorable* by most participants was not the heritage objects or places themselves, but the mental process of meaning-making that was fueled by the stories told (by both the 'provider' to the 'listener' and the 'listener' to themselves or others in the group). These results are consistent with pre-existing research on this topic. For example, Ross & Saxena (2019) examine the potential of archaeological heritage (in this case, tangible archaeological heritage that has been physically lost) and the role of providers in creating memorable experiences from it. They conclude that innovative meaning-making through theming and creative storytelling can lead to memorable tourist experiences. Moreover, Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) suggested that context and the level of customer engagement contribute to the formation of personal meaning, and to the perceived uniqueness of the co-created experience, which were both found to be leading factors of memorability (Kim et al., 2012). Similarly Prebensen & Foss (2011), found that a higher level of experience involvement brings a more memorable and meaningful experience to the consumer. This suggests a possible relationship between the themes of emotional engagement and memorability, which was also apparent in the results of this work. For instance, both participants FG3A and FG2C stated that their most memorable moments were related to objects that they were able to emotionally engage with via personal connections.

The idea that co-creative experiences lead to higher perceived memorability on behalf of the tourist has been thoroughly explored and confirmed in other academic works (Campos et al., 2016; Meng & Cui, 2020; Sthapit et al., 2019). Therefore, it is no surprise that a co-creative activity, such as storytelling, would have a similar effect. In fact, the creation of

narratives and selection of artifacts that will resonate strongly with visitors' memories and experiences are considered central to the curation of exhibitions in the 'new museum' (Baker et al., 2016). This work contributes to a body of knowledge solidifying the importance of delivering memorable co-creative experiences in heritage tourism settings. Moreover, it suggests that storytelling is an effective tool for achieving this feat. This is particularly important for the Islamic Museum of Tavira and other museums and heritage attractions with similar experience designs, as memorability is one of the most important elements for enhancing experiences of guided tours (Weiler & Black, 2015).

5.3 Tourist suggestions and preferences for heritage storytelling

Many studies have highlighted that tourists increasingly seek authenticity in their experiences and that engagement in certain experiences contributes to higher perceived authenticity (Diaz-Soria, 2017; Frost et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2020; J. Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Zatori et al., 2018). As suggested by Diaz-Soria (2017), tourists tend to be looking for authenticity when they go on guided tours in particular. Ideally, tour guiding should allow for authentic events and interactions to take place (e.g. with locals), but also enable experiences of self-discovery to happen (Zatori et al., 2018). These could also enhance the sense of existential authenticity for the visitor. In fact, some aspects of constructive and existential authenticity can involve interactions with 'culture-brokers' (e.g. tour guides), local people, and even other tourists (Zatori et al., 2018). This is in line with what was expressed by participant FG3E regarding wanting to have non-mediated experiences in the local life and town of Tavira. According to Bryon (2012: 29):

“The desire of tourists to engage within more intense relationships with the locals of tourist destinations is growing. It is the expression of the wish to experience the 'authentic' tourist site, to go beyond the destination's front stage and to get involved into its back stage.”

In addition, some participants expressed the storytelling visit could have been improved in the way it offered insight on how the area's Islamic past influenced the town and the culture of Tavira in the present day. Wood (2014) obtained similar results, as students engaged their historical imagination by reflecting on stories from the past and considered how these might be translated into the present (Wood, 2014). That said, authenticity “is not [always] dependent on external referents or the direct context of the experience, but on the

transformational potential of the experiences themselves and the imagination and skill of the tourists” (Richards & Wilson, 2006: 1221). Museums and heritage attractions should, therefore, consider how their experience design will promote and foster the visitors’ sense of authenticity, whether it be through the external environment, or the imaginative opportunities provided.

Finally, results of this work suggest that participants are interested in participating in their heritage tourism experiences in more interactive ways, including through digital technologies. In fact, many expressed that the use of technology and multimedia supports could make the experience more engaging, particularly when learning about history and archeology. It is widely agreed that museums and historical sites need to invest in digital storytelling to attract and engage their audiences (Katifori et al., 2018; Katifori, Perry, et al., 2020). These multimedia supports should aid the experience provider in creating immersive and enjoyable environments that allow the visitor to actively participate in stories (Ioannidis et al., 2013; Pujol et al., 2012). For example, findings of Katifori, Tsitou, et al. (2020) revealed that a storytelling app promoted engagement, learning, and deep reflection in visitors. It was, therefore, predictable that this study’s participants would be interested in having such digital advancements incorporated into the storytelling experience.

Museums and heritage attractions could take their storytelling experiences to the next level by offering Augmented or Virtual Reality to their visitors; however, these options can be expensive and difficult to maintain (Carrozzino & Bergamasco, 2010; Roussou, 2001; Shehade & Stylianou-Lambert, 2020). That said, affordable methods of digital storytelling do exist, such as Desktop-based solutions. In addition, consumer technologies are increasingly evolving to make these digital experiences more accessible (Carrozzino & Bergamasco, 2010). Museums and heritage attractions should, therefore, make the adoption of newer technologies a priority if they are to facilitate storytelling experiences that meet the expectations of the modern tourist.

Alternatively, if budgets cannot accommodate the adoption of such technologies, museums and heritage attractions could also consider increasing visitor participation through themed activities, theatre, and role play. Results from this study suggested that these experiences could potentially be just as interactive as digital experiences, in the opinion of

visitors. This is also cohesive with the findings from previous research, as role play and themed activities become more commonplace in co-creative tourist experiences and are increasingly recognized for having beneficial outcomes for the tourist (Everett & Parakootathil, 2016; Ghisoiu et al., 2017; Mijnheer & Gamble, 2019; Ross & Saxena, 2019).

6. CONCLUSION

This work had two primary aims: 1) to develop an experimental methodological framework that breaks down heritage storytelling into its various elements, and 2) to implement the developed framework in a heritage tourism setting and evaluate how storytelling influenced the tourist experience from the perspective of the visitor. The first research aim was achieved through a rigorous literature review of storytelling in heritage tourism settings, which allowed the author to identify the different elements of heritage storytelling and create the experimental methodological framework for this research. The second research aim was also achieved, as this framework was implemented at the Islamic Museum of Tavira to facilitate a “storytelling tour” that was then tested on three groups of participants. Using focus group methodology, the influence of storytelling from the perspective of the participants was investigated.

6.1 Summary of results

Based on the thematic analysis, the author of this work can provide answers to the research questions. Regarding the first question (*What are the elements of heritage storytelling?*), six elements were identified in the literature review, namely: 1) historical stories, 2) myths, folklore, and legends, 3) dynamic discussions, 4) personal stories and experiences, 5) themed activities, staged performances, and re-enactments, 5) visual and digital storytelling, and 6) poetry. If museums of heritage attractions are interested in using storytelling in their experience design, any of these elements can be used to implement this co-creative activity.

In response to the second question (*How was the storytelling tour received by the participants overall?*), this work can conclude that the “storytelling tour” was received positively by most participants. Many were surprised at the stories in the tour and found the experience engaging. In fact, some participants contrasted the “storytelling tour” with previous experiences they have had in traditional museum settings, explaining how the guide’s storytelling was more engaging than, for example, an audio-guide.

Considering the third research question (*How did storytelling influence their heritage experience at the Islamic Museum of Tavira?*), three principal themes were determined by

the author: emotional engagement, imagination, and memorability. In sum, storytelling impacted the heritage experience of the visitor by stimulating affective responses (e.g., empathy), evoking a process of imagination, and creating memorable experiences. The outcome is a co-creative experience that effectively allows the visitor to engage in personal meaning-making and experiential learning in heritage tourism settings.

Finally, regarding the last question (*What are some of the limitations and possible areas of expansion for storytelling in heritage settings?*), participants highlighted that storytelling experiences must consider factors of authenticity and participation to meet their expectations. More specifically, the analysis suggested that an integration of heritage storytelling with the physical places in which the stories occur may heighten visitors' emotional responses and *perceived authenticity* of the overall experience. In addition, most participants showed an interest in storytelling experiences that are facilitated by digital technologies. Many expressed that the use of technology and multimedia supports could make the experience more engaging, particularly when learning about history and archeology. If digital upgrades are not financially plausible for museums or heritage attractions, interactive storytelling via themed activities, such as role play, may equally engage visitors and increase participation.

The findings of this work were largely complementary to those of other works, and therefore met the expectations of the author. Heritage tourists have long been the recipient of an authorized heritage discourse (Smith, 2006) that was communicated to them in a one-directional and non-negotiable way. However, in the context of the experience economy and 'new museology', tourist and tour guide are both storyteller and co-creator (Bryon, 2012; Chronis, 2005; Overend, 2012; Weiler & Black, 2015). Storytelling was perceived by participants as engaging, indicating that this co-creative activity is worth implementing for 'new' museums and heritage attractions. As discussed previously, multiple studies have revealed a link between storytelling and emotional responses (Baker et al., 2016; Bedford, 2001), imagination (Derrien & Stokowski, 2020; VanSledright & Brophy, 2016; Wood, 2014), and memorability (Ross & Saxena, 2019; Weiler & Black, 2015). This work, therefore, contributes to solidifying storytelling's importance in tourism experiences alongside the works of other authors. Finally, as tourists increasingly seek more authentic and interactive experiences (Diaz-Soria, 2017; Gao et al., 2020; Katifori et al., 2018; Zatori

et al., 2018), it is not surprising that participants of this study suggested ways in which the “storytelling tour” could prioritize these factors.

Although the findings of this work largely corroborated and strengthened findings from past studies that focused on storytelling in tourism in general (Bassano et al., 2019; Frost et al., 2020; Moin et al., 2020; Ross & Saxena, 2019), this work contributed to establishing the relevance of storytelling in heritage tourism settings (i.e., museums and heritage attractions). Storytelling in this specific context, as well as its impact on tourists’ heritage experiences, has been underexplored in the literature. Said differently, although the importance of storytelling is already widely agreed upon by most academics in tourism studies, the definition, implementation, and influence of storytelling in heritage experiences hasn’t yet been adequately researched. This work responded to this academic gap in the literature by 1) developing a framework that clearly defines the elements of heritage storytelling, 2) offering an example of how this framework could be implemented in a real service context, and 3) exploring how heritage storytelling impacted the tourist experience from the perspective of the visitor.

The importance of this work lies in its ability to propose storytelling as a co-creative tool that can increase visitor engagement and lead to memorable experiences in heritage tourism settings. This is particularly relevant to heritage attractions and museums that are struggling to meet the demands of the ‘experience era’ and are searching for ways to regain a competitive advantage in the market. Little research has provided heritage tourism managers with guidance as to how to practically implement co-creative activities. Consequently, this work assists museums and heritage attractions in modernizing their experience facilitation, highlighting storytelling as an accessible and effective tool for creating engaging and memorable tourist experiences.

6.2 Limitations of the work

This work, however, has several limitations. The identified elements presented in the methodological framework are not extensive or exhaustive. An in-depth review is needed to identify and classify all potential storytelling avenues for heritage attractions. Moreover, the work was completed under constraints that may have influenced the applicability, replicability, and accuracy of results. Due to covid-19 and the many closures and restrictions

that ensued, fieldwork was limited in both the number of times the experience could be repeated and number of participants that could attend. In addition, university students were selected using convenience sampling, which can be criticized for its lack of external validity and transferability. However, considering the lack of tourists throughout the pandemic, convenience sampling was selected despite its disadvantages. Finally, as the study adopted a qualitative and interpretivist approach, it is important to disclaim that the process of coding can never be completely free of the influence of the researcher's analytic preconceptions of the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

6.3 Recommendations for future research

This work introduces various opportunities for future avenues for research. First, a systematic literature review is needed to identify all possible elements of heritage storytelling. This could serve as a complete overview of storytelling in heritage tourism settings, providing a clear indication of what heritage storytelling can consist of in this context and facilitating implementation for museums and heritage attractions. It is also suggested that future studies on this topic utilize an experimental approach and quantitative data analysis to infer a cause-and-effect relationship between storytelling and other elements of tourists' heritage experiences (e.g., affective responses, imagination, memorability). As this work is focused on the lived experience of storytelling, supporting quantitative studies may corroborate and solidify findings. In addition, the author suggests that a triangulation of the research findings using other methods or data may help strengthen the findings of this work.

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APPENDIX 1 – FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Focus Group Guide: Islamic Museum of Tavira Project 2020/2021

1. To-do list

- Find participants
- Schedule bus
- Print out passenger form for bus driver
- Fill out passenger form for the bus driver
- Print focus group guide and tour layout
- Prepare and print consent forms
- Confirm classroom
- Memorize focus group guide
- Prepare name tags

2. Equipment and materials

- Recording equipment (phone and Sony recorder)
- Battery pack, adapter, and phone charging cable
- USB
- Focus Group Guide and tour layout
- Pen and notepad

For participants:

- Consent forms
- Name tags
- Hand sanitizer and wipes
- Disposable masks
- Water bottles

3. Introduction and group rules

Welcome

Hello everyone! Thank you for agreeing to be part of this focus group. I really appreciate you taking the time to be here today and help me with my research!

Explain purpose

The reason we are having these focus groups is to learn more about your experience at the Islamic Museum of Tavira and, more specifically, your guided tour. For me to have the best data possible, I really need your input and your honest and open thoughts. This means that I want to know your positive feelings *and* your negative feelings. In other words, there are

no wrong or right answers to my questions! Even though I know it is a bit awkward, I want this to be like a casual discussion among colleagues. My role today is to guide our discussion, ask the questions, and make sure we are staying on track in terms of time. The discussion should last about an hour to an hour and a half, so due to these time constraints I apologize in advance if I need to interrupt you so that everyone has time to answer the questions. Before we start...

Group rules

1. Everyone's participation and opinion matter here. This is an open and inclusive discussion where we respect what everyone has to say and let everyone have a chance to speak.
2. One person talking at a time, please. This session is recorded so please do not speak over each other. Also, try to speak loud and clear enough for the recording. Please keep in mind that the recording will not pick-up things like nods of agreement, etc., so try to verbalize your feelings as much as you can without interrupting others.
3. I would also like to ask you to be attentive during the session and kindly turn off your cellphones.
4. Finally, this is a casual conversation; you are not meant to talk in a certain order. Also, feel free to ask questions whenever you want. There is no need to ask for my permission if you need to go to the bathroom or leave the room.

Everything that is said here today is confidential! In the report, your identity will remain anonymous. Any questions before we start? (*Respond to questions*)

Introductions

My name is Meghan...

Just to get us started, let us have everyone say their name and tell us why you decided to study in Portugal! (*Point to someone to start; randomly select people to demonstrate that people do not talk in sequence*).

4. Questions

Ice-breaker question

Q1: Let us start with something easy. You just went on a tour of the Islamic Museum of Tavira. Tell me about one of your favorite parts of that experience.

Exploration questions

Q2: Were there things about this experience that were different than what you expected before coming for the tour? If yes, how so? // Were there things that you had hoped to experience that were missing in the tour?

- P: Can you talk a bit more about that?

Q3: Tell me about the moments that you felt the most engaged during the tour // What about the moments that you did not feel engaged or felt bored or disconnected?

- P: How exactly did you feel in that moment?
- P: Why do you think you felt that way?
- P: What was it about the tour that made you feel like that?

Q4: How would you describe the dynamic between you and Sandra during the tour?

- P: Can you talk a bit more about that?
- P: How did this dynamic make you feel? How did the dynamic impact your experience of the tour overall?

Q5: What would you say was the most memorable moment of your tour of the Islamic Museum of Tavira?

- P: Why do you think that moment stood out to you?
- P: Why do you say that it was memorable?
- P: How did you feel in that moment?

Q6: Did the tour of the Islamic Museum of Tavira help you connect to heritage, archaeology, or conservation in any way? Please explain.

- P (It did not help me...): Can you elaborate on why you feel that way?
- P (It did help me...): When exactly did you feel this way? // Can you elaborate on why you feel that way?
- P: What was it about the tour that made you feel like that?

Exit question

Q7: If you were part of the management team at the Islamic Museum of Tavira, how would you make the tour more interactive and engaging?

5. Conclusion

Thank you everyone for sharing your thoughts with me today. I am excited to learn more about this topic and the data you have given me is essential. Are there any final questions or comments before we finish? (*Respond to questions*)

APPENDIX 2 – CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Project description

I, Meghan Beevor, student at the University of Algarve, ask for student volunteers to participate in my project so that I may collect data for my dissertation under the supervision of Professors Manuela Guerreiro and Ana Campos. The topic of my research concerns tourist experiences in archaeological settings. On [date], the selected participant will participate in a guided tour at the Islamic Museum of Tavira. Afterwards, participants will participate in a focus group that will last between 1.5 – 2 hours in a classroom at [Penha or Gambelas campus], University of Algarve.

To ask any questions about this project, please contact Meghan Beevor at [phone number] or [email].

Consent of participant

I _____ (participant's name, please print) agree to take part in the research project specified above. I have read and understood the study purpose as described. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

1. I agree to participate in the field trip described above
2. I agree to allowing the tour in which I will be participating to be audio-taped and video-taped
3. I agree to be involved in the focus group
4. I agree to allowing the focus group to be audio-taped and video-taped
5. I agree that information derived from the focus group may be used in publications and presentations to further the educational goals of the University of Algarve.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way. I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the focus group for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics. Authorized persons from the University of Algarve have the right to review focus group records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law.

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____