

Understanding visitors' experiences at Portuguese literary museums: An analysis of TripAdvisor reviews

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Abstract

In tourism studies, the analysis of online review websites is a gateway to understanding visitors' experiences. After producing an updated inventory of literary museums in Portugal, this exploratory and qualitative research examines visitors' experience at Portuguese literary museums, as revealed by national and international visitors on TripAdvisor. In the absence of national studies on visitors' experience at these cultural attractions, this paper addresses this gap, using NVivo R.1.6 software and thematic analysis to identify the common experiential tropes in the visitors' online spontaneous feedback. The findings indicate that most reviewers perceive this experience as a platform for gaining knowledge about the authors, work and historical context. The results also reveal that the writers' objects (even when replicas), the curatorial options, and the tour guiding staff contribute significantly to sensing a connection with the author, stepping into the past and co-creating an aura of authenticity in the museum experience.

Keywords: Literary museum; literary tourism; museum visitor experience; TripAdvisor; Portugal.

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1. Introduction

Literary museums are a genre within the constellation of museums. They focus on acquiring, preserving and communicating literature through museographical codes to promote knowledge about literature and its role in society (International Committee for Literary and Composers Museums, 2019).

Apart from the traditional literary museums established in former writers' houses (*i.e.*, authors' house museums), there are literary museums in heritage buildings that bear no relation to the writer's life or in new supposedly built constructions. Whatever their shape, literary museums document and celebrate literature and writers and lodge collections of books, manuscripts, tools of the literary writing craft, photographs, videos, personal objects, period items or replicas of those objects. They are a sort of autobiographical monument after particular curatorial choices of layout and decoration, and they are close to the biography literary genre as they create "a vision of the person who inhabited that space." (Albano, 2007: 15).

As key attractions in cultural tourism, over the last decades, museums have transformed from information-centred institutions to audience-centred institutions, pursuing visitors' interaction, participation and engagement (Noy, 2021). This paradigm shift, together with the growth of tourism as an information-intensive industry, "using technological innovations and online platforms throughout its sectors and activities" (Ivanova & Ivanov, 2020: 201), increased the significance of online consumer ratings and user-written reviews as they provide complementary data to museums whose work strives to meet visitors' expectations while maintaining economic self-benefit and bringing economic influx to the regions where they are located (Orea-Giner *et al.*, 2021; Su & Teng, 2018). Thus, it is relevant to understand how visitors configure the museum experience and identify critical issues in visitors' experience that may contribute to adjusting the current practices in museum management and communication.

Outside Portugal, researchers have conducted content analysis of online reviews of literary museums as a source of insight into the audience's experience (*e.g.*, Atsiz & Temiz, 2022; MacLeod, 2021), but, in Portugal, the literature review has not identified any studies. Therefore, this paper seeks to contribute to filling this gap. This research also adds to the literature on literary tourism experiences, as there is not much research about this cultural and heritage tourism niche from the visitors' perspective (Bu *et al.*, 2021; Çevik, 2020).

To this end, this study proposes an interdisciplinary approach to examine visitors' comments on TripAdvisor, contributing to knowledge on visitors' experience at Portuguese literary museums and inventorying these museums. This exploratory and qualitative study aims to answer the following research questions (RQ): (RQ₁) what are the most recurrent themes and subthemes in the visitors' reviews? (RQ₂) which features of the museum experience contribute to a positive perception of the visit? And (RQ₃) what do visitors perceive as unfavourable in the experience of visiting literary museums?

The paper is divided into five sections. Following the introduction, a literature review frames the concepts of the research (literary museums, literary tourism and museums' audience experience) and the progress of research on these topics. The third part details the methodology, the fourth reports and discusses the key findings, and the last outlines the main conclusions and the study's theoretical and practical implications.

2. Literature review

2.1. *The birth of literary celebrity and literary museums*

In Europe, the fifteen-century printing revolution played a two-fold role in developing literary touring: it allowed more people to access books and helped flower the notion of literary celebrity (Bolter, 1991). In this regard, Hendrix (2008) recalls that the first recorded trips to Petrarch's home occurred in the 1400s, making writers' home museums one of the first products of literary tourism and Petrarch the first European celebrity author.

From this period up to the nineteenth century, the allure of the writer's genius gradually enhanced, fostered by the rise of the novel (in the 1700s), assisted in shaping literary-inspired visits (Robinson, 2002a) and motivated the preservation of sites of historical interest to cater for the visitors' interests, namely writers' former houses (Hendrix, 2020; Taylor & Pouliot, 2020). The Grand Tour (in the 1700s and 1800s) also performed a vital impulse in expanding touring toward literary authors' places (mostly homes and graves) (Westover, 2012) and represented instances of embryonic European literary tourism. Concurrently, transport developments, along with broader social trends, such as the Romantic movement, played a significant role in the expansion of the attraction of the educated middle-class readers towards the "novelists and poets of the day" (Robinson & Andersen, 2002: 13).

Most European writers' house museums opened to the public at the beginning of the nineteenth century, *e.g.*, Robert Burns' House Museum in Scotland in 1817 (Robinson, 2002a), Victor Hugo's Museum in Paris in 1902 (Poisson, 1997) and Shakespeare's Birthplace in England, in the 1850s (Thomas, 2012), to name a few examples. Although they were small scale (as they were limited to the educated and literary enthusiasts), the number of writers' house museums increased most notoriously in the United Kingdom and France, but also in other European destinations and the United States of America (Agarwal & Shaw, 2017).

Writers' home museums are "the workshop of genius, the apogee of literary tourist sites" (Watson, 2006: 90), a testament to the writers' time and place and an invitation to experience the writers' intimacy (Hendrix, 2020). In them, visitors expect to access the "facts behind the fiction" (Robinson, 2002b: 63), complement the portrait of the authors (Hendrix, 2013) and add information to the reading act (Robinson & Andersen, 2002: xiv).

By the twenty-first century, the quest for the preservation of literary memory and heritage has resulted in the creation of numerous literary museums worldwide ¹ (Bonniot-Mirloup & Blasquiet, 2016; Hendrix, 2013), as they are strong symbols of the writer and literary art (Ousby, 1990) and powerful resources for the tourism industry (Watson, 2006). Indeed, they "appeal across a range of markets" (Robinson 2002a: 8), attracting both literary fans and non-literary enthusiasts (Müller, 2006), and they are a strategy to enhance the territory's image, economy and arts and promote national identity and collective memory (Spring *et al.*, 2022).

Currently, literary museums take various shapes: houses where the author was born, died or lived; houses where the author has never lived; museums that celebrate fictional characters or literary books; museums about geographically defined literature or a particular literary genre; museums celebrating literary art, in general, and eco-literary museums or literary landscapes museums, *i.e.*, the landscape of a writer or a writer's work. Often, only dead authors are musealised, but there are exceptions, such as Günter Grass, who planned his museum – the Günter Grass Haus – in Lübeck.

In sum, European literary museums encompass various forms that seem parallel to the diversity of authors' work and lives and the visitors' motivations and expectations. After this brief overview of the evolution of these museums in Europe, the following section addresses the Portuguese literary museums.

2.2. *Literary museums in Portugal*

As far as this research was able to ascertain, there are thirty-two literary museums in Portugal (Table 1), and the methodology section details the procedure the author took to achieve this number.

In line with international literary museums, Portuguese literary museums are the manifestation of a goal to build a symbolic place that promotes literary heritage. Along with exhibiting authors' items (*e.g.*, book and art collections, photographs, typewriters, manuscripts, private correspondence), museums frequently contemplate research centres, libraries and non-permanent exhibitions. Many also function as artist residences, literary and cultural education centres and venues for workshops and conferences. These museums encompass three concepts: writers' house museums installed in former writers' dwellings, writers' museums lodged in historical buildings or recent architectural structures and writers' foundations, often housed in historical buildings, sometimes with no connection to the authors' life. Regardless of their differences, they are all literary places (*i.e.*, destinations of literary touring) as visitors attach literary meaning to them, and the significance of this meaning draws them there (Herbert, 1996). They all are gateways to writers and literary art, advocates of literary heritage, practice and knowledge (*i.e.*, intangible cultural assets), generators of knowledge about objects and architecture (*i.e.*, tangible cultural assets) and promoters of regional territories' development. Additionally, in a time of cultural globalisation, these attractions play a critical role in inventorying, documenting and preserving local culture and identity to value uniqueness, memory and authenticity (Miranda, 2012).

Now, five observations about literary museums in Portugal. The first is that all museums, but one, celebrate male writers. Two museological projects celebrate women writers (Florabela Espanca in Alentejo and Fernanda Botelho in Lisbon), but they are not yet open to the public. Moreover, a new museum about a male writer (Almeida Garrett) is planned to inaugurate in Oporto. There is no easy explanation for this, as there are plenty of female writers whose biography and work validate the creation of a museum.

The second is that most museums are in northern Portugal, which mirrors the location of most art museums in the country (Portuguese Observatory on Cultural Activities, 2021). Apparently, northern local private or governmental initiatives display more vital interest in culture and heritage sites.

Thirdly, nine out of thirty-two literary museums celebrate four Portuguese writers: Ferreira de Castro, João de Deus, José Régio and Miguel Torga. These authors are the object of not one museum but two or three documenting their lives and work. This has very likely happened because these writers were born and lived in different places, and in both places, there is still physical evidence (their homes) of their lives. For instance, the Ferreira de Castro house museum is lodged in the birth house of the author, and the museum is in the town where he lived and chose to be buried. One of João de Deus' house museums is installed in the building where he lived his adolescence, in the Algarve and the other in Lisbon, where he resided in his final years. José Régio's museum is in the north, where he was born and settled at the end of his life, and the house museum in Alentejo, where he worked as a teacher for over thirty years. Concerning Miguel Torga, there are three museological structures: a house museum in Coimbra, in the house where the author lived and died, another in São Martinho da Anta, where he was born, and a museum - *Espaço Miguel Torga* (Miguel Torga Space) - also in São Martinho da Anta. This last structure

is an initiative of the Northern Regional Board of Culture, and it is lodged in a building designed by a renowned Portuguese architect (<http://www.espacomigueltorga.pt/>).

The fourth observation regarding Portuguese literary museums is that contrary to the UK or France, where writers' house museums opened in the nineteenth century or previously, the first museum opened in the twentieth century (in 1922) in northern Portugal (*i.e.*, Camilo Castelo Branco House Museum).

The fifth and final reflection refers to their heterogeneous designations. Although the majority are "house-museums", some opted for "house" or "museum" and one for "house literary museum". Two others are "Foundations", reflecting their specific financial status, and others bear less standard terms ("Space" and "Literary tower"), which might result from the intention to depart from the more traditional term "museum", a trend signalled by Spring and colleagues (2022).

The literature review on Portuguese literary museums identified five works, but none researches visitors' experience, and the inventory of literary museums is inevitably outdated. However, they are mentioned here (chronologically) to attest to the growing interest in this museum genre (Moreira, 2006; Ponte, 2007; Alvim, 2008; Rosa, 2013; Franco, 2018).

2.3. *Conceptualising visitors' experience in museums*

The visitors' experience is a core product of a museum (Cunnell & Prentice, 2000). However, its multidimensional and intangible nature challenges presenting a succinct definition (Selstad, 2007). Therefore, considering the complexity of this psychological and individual process, researchers often consider it in the context of its constituent elements (Sharpley & Stone, 2012), *e.g.*, perception, image formation, tourist-host relationships and space interaction. According to Roederer and Filser (2018: 215), the experience is "majorly affected by but not limited to the settings of a museum, from its entrance/lobby, exhibitions, amenity areas (restrooms, gift shop, and food service), to the macro-architecture of the museum, the physical context, and the interpretative materials." Additionally, the museum's mission and the visitors' own agenda also determine the experience, which initiates before entering the museum (Rowley, 1990). It begins with researching information about the museum, often online, and reading visitors' reviews (Alexander *et al.*, 2018), like the ones analysed in this paper. Equally, the experience continues after the visit (Roederer & Filser, 2018) in "the visitors' memories and, nowadays, with post-visit discussion on social media, photographs on Instagram, or reviews on TripAdvisor." (Alexander *et al.*, 2018: 156).

The literature review recurrently identifies three significant dimensions in the tourist experience: learning, enjoyment and escape (Kang & Gretzel, 2012), which are also identified in the museum experience (McIntosh, 1999). These dimensions impact the perception of a positive experience that often derives from multiple factors rather than one single attribute (Harrison & Shaw, 2004). Regarding the first dimension, visitors often perceive the visit as favourable when it is a "significant learning experience" through the medium of the exhibits (Falk & Dierking, 2011: xv). Alongside this educational dimension, research on European museum audiences reveals that enjoyment is often a more common motivation than learning via access to the past, encounters with inspiring examples, and social interaction (Sharpley, 2021). The last dimension, "escape", refers to tourists being temporarily immersed in the context of the destination/attraction and feeling freer from ordinary life constraints (Rojek, 1993). In the scope of museum experience, escape also implies a return to the past and feelings of nostalgia, a process in which "authenticity attributes [in architecture, relics and landscape]" are the most important (Wang & Zhang, 2017: 248).

Table 1. *Literary museums in Portugal (descriptive information)*

Literary museums	Brief introduction of the writer	Location	Opening date
Afonso Lopes Vieira House Museum	(1878-1946) poet, lawyer	Marinha Grande	1949
Antero de Quental House	(1842-1891) poet, essayist, philosopher	Vila do Conde	2013
Aquilino Ribeiro Foundation	(1885-1963) novelist, essayist, translator	Soutosa	1988
Bocage House and Américo Ribeiro Photo Archive	(1765-1805) poet, translator	Setúbal	2005
Camilo Castelo Branco House Museum	(1825-1890) novelist, poet	S. Miguel de Seide	1922
Cândido Guerreiro e Condes de Alte Museum	(1871-1953) poet, journalist, politician	Alte	2009
Carlos de Oliveira House Museum	(1921-1981) poet, novelist, literary critic, translator	Vila de Febres	2016
Domingos Monteiro House Museum	(1903-1980) poet, lawyer	Mesão Frio	2014
Fernando Namora House Museum	(1919-1989) novelist, medical doctor	Condeixa-a-Nova	1990
Fernando Pessoa House	(1888-1935) poet, writer, literary critic, translator, philosopher, magazine founder	Lisbon	1993
Ferreira de Castro House Museum	(1898-1974) novelist, journalist	Oliveira de Azeméis	1982
Ferreira de Castro Museum		Sintra	1982
Fialho de Almeida House Literary Museum	(1857-1911) novelist	Cuba	2019
Guerra Junqueiro House Museum	(1850-1923) novelist, poet, journalist	Oporto	1940
Irene Lisboa House Museum	(1892-1958) novelist, short story writer, poet, educational essayist	Arranhó	2007
João de Deus House Museum	(1830-1896) poet, pedagogue	S. Bartolomeu de Messines	1997
João de Deus House Museum		Lisbon	1982
José Régio House	(1901-1969) novelist, poet, playwright, essayist, magazine founder, teacher	Vila do Conde	1975
José Régio House Museum		Portalegre	1971
José Saramago Foundation	(1922-2010) novelist, Nobel Prize Winner in Literature	Lisbon	2007
Júlio Dinis House Museum	(1839-1871) novelist, playwright, poet, medical doctor	Ovar	1996
Liberdade House – Mário Cesariny Literary Tower	(1923-2006) poet, painter Canonical Portuguese authors (13 th - 20 th century)	Lisbon Vila Nova de Famalicão	2013 2020
Manuel Teixeira Gomes House	(1860-1941) novelist, politician, the seventh president of the Portuguese First Republic	Portimão	2009
Miguel Torga House Museum	(1907-1995) novelist, poet, essayist, playwright, medical doctor	Coimbra	2007
Miguel Torga House Museum		São Martinho de Anta	2022
Space Miguel Torga			2016
Palavra House – Vergílio Ferreira	(1916-1996) novelist, essayist, teacher	Melo	2018
Poesia House – Eugénio de Andrade	(1923-2005) poet	Póvoa de Atalaia	2017
Tormes House – Eça de Queiroz Foundation	(1845-1900) novelist, journalist	Baião	1999
Vasco de Lima Couto House Museum	(1924-1980) poet, actor, stage director	Constância	1981
Vitorino Nemésio House Museum	(1901-1978) poet, novelist, academic	Terceira (Azores)	2016

In short, the features of a museum experience that contribute to a positive perception of the visit primarily derive from the museum's ability to meet the visitors' expectations for information and better

understanding, enjoyment, intellectual curiosity and escape (Trinh & Ryan, 2013). However, each dimension impacts each visitor differently as they are contingent on the individual factors that animate the experience: intellectual competencies, prior knowledge, “senses, emotions and imagination” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 138).

A museum experience is not always perceived as positive. In this instance, the museum collection is one of the most decisive attributes (Zanibellato *et al.*, 2015). A finding also confirmed by Harrison and Shaw (2014), who stress the fact that other museum attributes such as the services (*e.g.*, gift shop, staff, entrance fee) and the atmosphere (*e.g.*, lighting, building, layout, crowd) may also act as dissatisfiers. However, the performance of these attributes is bi-directional, meaning that they may act both as drivers for a negative perception or a favourable perceived experience (Zanibellato *et al.*, 2015).

In this paper, museum experience is conceptualised as a combination of cognitive and affective factors (Busby & Shetliffe, 2013), and it correlates with the intertwined visitors’ unique personal context (*e.g.*, motivations, attitudes, emotions, prior knowledge) and the museum collection, services, practices, spatial context and staff.

The literature review did not identify studies on audience experience in Portuguese literary museums but revealed seven international works (Atsiz & Temiz, 2022; Bonniot-Mirloup, 2016; Herbert, 2001; MacLeod, 2021; Mansfield, 2015; Watson, 2006; Thyne *et al.*, 2009). In four of them, interviews, guests’ books and observation notes are the sources of information; in the remaining three, the data set comprises TripAdvisor reviews. In the findings section of this paper, the insights of these international research studies will be addressed to complement the discussion.

3. Methodology

Stemming from the assumptions that the tourist experience continues post-visit (Roederer & Fielser, 2018) and that the interpretation of visitors’ reviews may contribute valuable information to understanding visitors’ experience (Alexander *et al.*, 2018), this qualitative exploratory project takes an interpretive and inductive approach to analysing the domestic and international visitors’ perceptions of Portuguese literary museums, as reported on TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor is an experience-sharing platform and a sign of the increasing involvement of tourists in online technologies to communicate experiences and impressions of the destinations and attractions they visit. It was created in 2000, and it is one of the largest information sources (O’Connor, 2010), currently featuring over 900 million reviews of nearly 8 million businesses and locations worldwide. TripAdvisor assesses all submitted reviews, and in 2020, only 3.6% of reviews were determined to be fraudulent (TripAdvisor, 2021).

Researching online reviews has several advantages: data availability, the speed of data collection and non-intrusiveness with human subjects (Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019). However, online platforms are not perfect data sources as the data are not representative of all the museums’ visitors, and the subjectivity and lack of background information regarding the reviewer may also be disadvantages (Alexander *et al.*, 2018).

To inventory the Portuguese literary museums, the author explored the VisitPortugal website, which facilitated the identification of eleven literary museums, researched academic studies (Alvim, 2008; Franco, 2018; Moreira, 2006; Ponte, 2007; Rosa, 2013), which contributed ten other museums, explored on Google search engine, emailed the National Board for Cultural Heritage and phoned regional tourism offices, which provided information on eleven other museums. In the end, the author identified thirty-

two literary museums in continental Portugal and islands. Table 1 contains the final inventory (in alphabetical order), a brief introduction of the writer and data on the location and opening date. ²

The following step was to identify which museums had a webpage on TripAdvisor. Table 2 shows the final sample of the study, *i.e.*, the museums with a TripAdvisor page (12), the number of reviews available (634), and the number of reviews analysed in this study (456). The project comprises comments published between 2014 and 2019 when most reviews were published. Before 2014, the number of reviews is reduced, and after March 2020, there was a significant decrease due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regarding the *corpus* of this project, the author collected and analysed the total number of reviews when the number was low. When the number was high (as in Pessoa's and Saramago's), the collection followed the data saturation criterium (Guest *et al.*, 2006). Although "in qualitative research, there are no published guidelines or tests of adequacy for estimating the sample size equivalent to those formulas used in quantitative research", the process of saturation forms patterns that assign meaning to the seemingly diverse and disconnected qualitative data (Morse, 1995: 147). Data saturation is reached when no new information is inconsistent with the emerged themes and subthemes, and there is no change in the codebook. In this research, the author continuously compared the collected data to prior data in terms of new themes or subthemes, and when there were no variations in the analysis, saturation occurred. The subsequent examination of the number of analysed reviews *versus* the number of available reviews on TripAdvisor revealed that data saturation arose when around 50% of the reviews had been analysed. However, the author of this paper cannot firmly state that this principle applies to other studies.

Table 2. *Literary museums and reviews on the TripAdvisor platform (2014-2019)*

Literary museums	No. Reviews analysed on NVivo	Total number of reviews on TripAdvisor
Camilo Castelo Branco House Museum	30	30
Fernando Namora House Museum	4	4
Fernando Pessoa House	82	172
Ferreira de Castro Museum	10	10
Guerra Junqueiro House Museum	42	42
José Régio House (Vila do Conde)	17	17
José Régio House Museum (Portalegre)	33	33
José Saramago Foundation	126	214
Júlio Dinis House Museum	5	5
Manuel Teixeira Gomes House	11	11
Miguel Torga Space	8	8
Tormes House - Eça de Queiroz Foundation	88	88
Total	456	634

The reviews for the twelve museums were collected manually, in January and March 2021, and in their original languages. The author translated the reviews in other languages than English, French, Spanish and Italian (a small number of texts), as most reviewers wrote in Portuguese or English, even when they were not from an English-speaking country.

Data analysis: This study uses NVivo R.1.6 as a tool for content analysis. NVivo is a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software that enables counting word frequencies and identifying major themes

and subthemes in data sets. After first analysing the comments to identify recurrent tropes, the review samples were inspected in each theme and subtheme to check if the identification was correct. In this paper, theme means a latent construct in the reviewers' words to describe the literary museum experience, and subtheme refers to a subordinate of the theme. In the reviews, visitors weave multiple topics together; therefore, in several stages of the research, the close reading process had to be repeated to check if all the information had been coded. The following review (in italics) is an example of the reviewers' diverse information. After applauding the tour guide's competence, the reviewer mentions the experience was somehow disappointing (as the house and the collection were not impactful and the author had never lived there), and he concludes by praising and recommending a museum's additional service.

We were blessed with an excellent guide for this museum, which was fortunate as there was not much to see in this house museum. An ordinary house with some old furniture is not an unforgettable experience. Eça de Queiroz, the writer to whom the museum is dedicated, never lived in the house - he just owned it and never put it to much use. However, the restaurant in the foundation is worth a visit - try it!

Due to the subjective nature of the content analysis, the author invited a colleague to reduce individual bias. The auditor randomly picked a sample of comments for cross-checking once the researcher had extracted the high-frequency themes and subthemes in the visitors' comments. Few corrections were necessary, which is explained by the fact that the texts are short, which minimises misinterpretation of content and misclassification risks. This method helped ensure accuracy in reporting and increased the reliability of this study. Table 3 illustrates the research design.

Table 3. *The research design*

Research steps	Purpose
Research about literary museums	Inventory of Portuguese literary museums
Searching the literary museums on TripAdvisor	To identify the museums that have reviews on TripAdvisor
Data collection	To manually collect reviews from TripAdvisor
Reading and saving collected data	To get a first impression of the reviewers' content and remove unnecessary content (e.g., photos, date of the posting)
Content analysis	To codify text and identify the high-frequency coding references
Verifying the content of the high-frequency themes	To eliminate mistakes in the coding process and confirm the identification of high-frequency coding references
Third-party assessment	Validation of the coding process

4. Findings and discussion

To answer the RQs, the author analysed 456 reviews, resulting in 1052 coding references categorised in 7 high-frequency themes and 23 subthemes. The themes were the first to emerge in the analysis. The choice of the theme and subtheme names derives from the interpretation of the reviews and from the practice of researching literary tourism experiences.

Table 4. High-frequency themes, subthemes and coding references from the reviews (2014-2019)

High-frequency theme	Total Coding references	Subthemes	Coding references	Sample review extracts
Visit experience	383	Learning about the author's life, work and historical context	93	<i>The books, notes, videos and audios take us into this great writer's life. It is an immersion in great historical moments and reflections of our social-political context addressed in the works</i>
		Disappointment	55	<i>Fernando Pessoa is not in this building restored by an Italian architect, but rather in the streets of Baixa, after sunset, where his semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares lived</i>
		Feeling close to the author	49	<i>With so much care and different ways of approaching his work, I left the House feeling close to dear Fernando Pessoa.</i>
		Authenticity	48	<i>Visiting this house museum is to return to the past and feel the soul of Camilo Castelo Branco</i>
		Emotion	38	<i>I love Saramago, so it was a dream come true to be at the Saramago foundation, a beautiful house, restored, a very interesting and interactive collection, I cried seeing images of Saramago still alive, it is very sad, his ashes were at the foot of a tree right in front of the house. That moved me...</i>
		Return to the past	35	<i>It was spectacular, as if we had returned to the past. I had just read Eça's biography and felt like I was inside the book, in the places he described so well.</i>
		Tranquillity	16	<i>Painted white, the museum creates a very calm and cool atmosphere</i>
		Magic	15	<i>Beautiful visit. Entering Fernando Pessoa's room is something magical. Visiting the library and learning a little about his life story is exciting and magical.</i>
		Surprise	7	<i>I've been wanting to visit this house for a long time. It was a pleasant surprise, enriching with details of the life of this great writer</i>
		Imagination	7	<i>In this space, we can imagine, visualise and recreate the main character of "The city and the mountains" - Jacinto.</i>
		Experiencing the place that inspired the author	7	<i>It was here that he found the source of inspiration for the natural setting of one of his finest novels.</i>
		Experiencing the place where the book was set	7	<i>We found ourselves in the landscape described by the protagonist in the book</i>
Enjoyment	6	<i>One can enjoy artists reciting their poetry, watch short films, become children again with some playful games.</i>		
Museum Organisation	223	Staff and guided tours	88	<i>A place to visit and ask lots of questions because the guides are very knowledgeable!</i>
		Organisation and curatorship	54	<i>The place is well-organised with lots of details about the author and his publications. There are interactive boards, posters, and such about him.</i>
		Other services	43	<i>The souvenir shop is excellent, and we bought several things</i>
		The building	38	<i>The house has nothing special, but it stands out because of the quotations of texts on the façade.</i>
Practical advice	214	Tips for other visitors	192	<i>If you are a Portuguese literature lover like I am, visiting Pessoa's museum should be on your travel list.</i>
		Tips for the museums' management team	22	<i>The museum deserved more publicity. It seems that they are not interested</i>

High-frequency theme	Total Coding references	Subthemes	Coding references	Sample review extracts
The collection	147	Personal objects	126	<i>It was amazing to see his diaries, the drafts, the manuscripts...</i>
		Non-permanent exhibitions	21	<i>Besides the rooms dedicated to the permanent exhibition of Junqueiro's pieces, there is also an area for temporary exhibitions, which at the time was dedicated to 19th-century crockery.</i>
The Author	37		37	<i>It is HIS house! The Great Master of the Portuguese language, alongside Camões and Father António Vieira.</i>
Outside spatial experience	34		34	<i>Charming house surrounded by vineyards and trees.</i>
Attitude resulting from the experience	17	To read author's books	12	<i>To be honest, I didn't know anything about Camilo Castelo Branco, but after this visit I knew the story of his life, the way he lived in that house, and I wanted immediately to read one of his books.</i>
		To research the author	5	<i>I was extremely intrigued and curious to know more about the work of this great writer.</i>

Table 4 shows the results of the final codification model in descending order. In the left-hand column is the name of the seven high-frequency themes: “visitor experience” (theme description: the variables that characterise the visit to the museum); “museum organisation” (theme description: the museum’s organisation, curatorship, building, staff and other services); “practical advice” (theme description: the tips visitors share with prospective visitors and managerial tips to improve the visit to the museum); “the collection” (theme description: the items on display); “the author” (theme description: the writer the museum celebrates); “outside spatial experience” (theme description: the grounds outside the museum); “attitude resulting from the experience” (theme description: the consequences of the museum visit). The following column displays the number of coding references in each high-frequency theme. The middle column and the column to its right show the subthemes under each high-frequency theme. The right-hand column displays extracts from sample reviews that illustrate each subtheme. The identification of these themes and subthemes provides the answer to RQ1.

As stated previously, in one same review, visitors intertwine impressions on diverse themes and subthemes, echoing the multiple layers of the experience itself. However, the following presentation of findings isolates the common experiential trope and copies the reviews in italics to illustrate them. The heading of each subsection corresponds to a review.

4.1. *For lovers of good Portuguese literature, the museum is fascinating.*

In the data set, the subtheme “practical advice for prospective visitors” has the highest number of coding references (192). This result was anticipated as it reflects the primary purpose of TripAdvisor and shows the reviewers’ commitment to helping future visitors. The review extracts coded in this subtheme frequently include the phrases *I highly recommend*, and *it is worth* along with the verb *recommend* and the adjectives *interesting* and *worthwhile*. Reviewers often address those who admire the author and are literature enthusiasts, clearly mentioning the visit would be most interesting for them, as in the following review:

Apart from being an enriching cultural tour, for those who are fans of the writer, it is a moving experience to see the trajectory of his life, his intimacy, to be close to some of his furniture and personal belongings.

This feature highlights that visitors are aware that this literary tourism experience is more valuable for those who are well-informed about the authors and literature, as they would be, in principle, more skilled in “reading” the materiality and immateriality of the museums, as the “quasi-literary genre” that they are (Watson, 2020: 7). This feature equally illustrates Herbert's (2001: 330) perception that knowledgeable visitors make the most of the “effective qualities” of literary places. In this regard, a reviewer wrote:

The house and its surroundings served as inspiration for “The City and the Mountains”, so the visit is even more rewarding if you have already read the book.

However, in the data set, it is also clear that, in the visitors' view, prior literary competencies are not compulsory to assure a pleasurable experience as the visit is a fruitful opportunity to learn about an author they had never read. The museum experience is also a trigger to (re)reading or researching the author's books and life (17 coding references), and the following reviews testify to these effects:

To be honest, I didn't know anything about Camilo Castelo Branco, but after this visit, I knew the story of his life, the way he lived in that house, and I wanted immediately to read one of his books. / I should open this review by saying I knew nothing about Fernando Pessoa before a recent holiday in Lisbon, and this house served to spike my interest and encourage me to find out more about him.

Learning about the author's life, work and context is a frequent trope in the reviews (93 coding references), a result which echoes previous research findings (MacLeod, 2021), meets the museums' compelling non-formal educational context and matches one of the three most frequent dimensions in the tourist experience (Kang & Gretzel, 2012).

4.2. We really enjoyed being temporarily transported to the past and being able to understand a little bit more of what inspired the writer

As places of literary (and cultural) memory (Adigüzel, 2020), literary museums are the tangible linking element between the world of the living and the world of the dead, and their experience is also an opportunity to go on a time travel machine (Gorgas, 2001). As portals to the author, they facilitate a sense of stepping into the past (Herbert, 2001), offer a close-up of the author, to the places where he/she created the texts, to the places where the novel's plot is set and to the landscape which inspired the literary productions.

To introduce authors and literary art, most museums take a historical-biographical approach framed by biography, past time and geography (Sandmark, 2020), as it facilitates the communication of intangible elements (e.g., literary creation, inspiration and imagination). In these literary places, the reconstitution of the past performs a cultural memory-work (Hoskins, 2007), serving as an anchor point that fosters imagination, communication and production of knowledge about the authors, their work and historical context (Bu *et al.*, 2021), while it favours the interaction between the visitor and the place (Scarpeline, 2020). Reconstitution is often manifested in the reconstruction of personal space and the display of personal objects (Thyne *et al.*, 2009). Although the objects alone do not make for the experience, they are critical elements in enhancing and supporting the theme of the museum. The analysis of the reviews

mirrors this strategy as there are 126 coding references regarding the authors' possessions (the second most frequent subtheme).

In literary museums, most objects are imbued with biographical significance (*e.g.*, the writer's typewriter, manuscripts, desk, bed, diaries, photographs, books) and, to that extent, they are perceived as material extensions of the author and proof of the authors' past life narratives and personality (Albano, 2007). In the author's absence, they act as the author's representatives. A reviewer clearly expresses the evoking power of a significant object (in this case, a chair) as a tangible symbol of a fatal event in the writer's biography: *You will find here the chair where his agony ended (of his own accord).*

Exempt from their functional purpose, these objects are perceived as cultural and literary significant objects, and the curators are very aware of their visual and rhetorical strength to simulate the author's presence and encourage empathetic visitors' engagement with the writer. As testimonies to the past, these museums merge time and space, and the access to the authors' material objects (although, at times, replicas) stimulates visitors' imagination, enabling times to criss-cross and learn about the author (Atsiz & Temiz, 2022; Bonniot-Mirloup, 2016; Thyne *et al.*, 2009). This evoking power of the objects recalls Baudrillard's ([1968] 1996) understanding of antique objects as items capable of collapsing space and time and suspending the distance between the objects (of the past) and the subjects perceiving them (in the present). These biographical relics are also decisive in investing an aura of authenticity in the visitors' experience (Herbert, 1996; Morris, 2017), as if evidence of the past aggregated a sense of authenticity that is apparently absent otherwise.

However, the halo of authenticity does not stem from the objects per se. Instead, it generates from the interaction between the object and the subject: "authenticity of biographical relics is relative neither to the objects themselves nor to their function but to the system that frames them: that is to their relationship with the subject" (Baudrillard ([1968] 1996: 76). Indeed, in the museum experience, the visitor's participation is crucial in co-creating an "authentic experience" (Prentice, 2001). Thus, authenticity is not an objective quality of things but the agreement of visitors regarding qualities that define objects and places as authentic. In this process, the implied authority of the museum as the agent of the pre-interpretation and authentication of objects and places plays a crucial part, triggering a perception of objects and places as genuine, real and trustworthy (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). The objects (and the place) impact the visitors for what they evoke instead of what they are. A reviewer wrote:

For me, it was very interesting to be in the room where the author lived and to be able to stand next to the mythical chest of drawers where, in a single night, he wrote the famous 'The keeper of sheep'. And another: I was close to Eça, to his objects, time and manner. Listening to his adventures and the anecdotes about the Quinta de Tormes, surprised me once again. Did you know that Eça found a chicken coop inside the chapel? He was inspired by this episode to explain why Jacinto returns from Paris to visit his ancestral home, not because of the chicken coop but because of the storm that destroys the chapel and unearths the bones of the clan.

There are 48 coding references regarding the trope of authenticity in the data set. In them, the myth of authenticity seems to derive from expectations being met or surpassed and from a sense of stepping into the past (35 coding references). The following review illustrates this experience:

Spectacular, as if we returned to the past. I had just read Eça's biography, and it was as if I was inside the book, in the places he described so well. Everything was there, and I liked it very much.

Positive “authentic” experiences are not only facilitated by original items but also by the reproductions of objects and rooms. Indeed, several reviewers acknowledge that rooms are not the same as when the author lived in that space and that not all items are original, but that does not negatively impact the assessment of the experience. The following review exemplifies such experiences: *There is not much left of the original house, but I could sense his spirit*. However, for some visitors, it is significant that the museum is lodged in a former dwelling of the author. This feature seems to facilitate the creation of a sense of authenticity, closeness to the author, return to the past, emotion and even magic (cf. Brown, 2016):

A beautiful visit. Entering Fernando Pessoa's room is something magical. Visiting the library and learning a little about his life story is just exciting and magical. /Being the house where Fernando Pessoa lived his last years, I felt a chill entering /Visiting this house-museum is a return to the past and feel the soul of Camilo Castelo Branco.

4.3. *The whole visiting process takes place as if it were an initiation ceremony. [...] It feels like we're going on a pilgrimage*

Regardless of each museum's features and curational options, there is a crucial binding agent in all of them: the author. Notwithstanding the long and lengthy discussions about the figure of the author (Barthes, 1968) or the critique of the biographical perspective in the understanding of literature (Holland, 1975), the allure of the author is the most vital appealing attribute of these museums (Hendrix, 2020; Robinson & Andersen, 2002), as described in the first part of this paper. Although the 1800s and 1900s cult of the genius and almost religious admiration for authors and their places do not prevail in most recent experiences of literary tourism (Herbert, 2001), a fact confirmed in this research, several visitors' reviews include laudatory words about the authors: *one of our greatest writers; the greatest poet of all times; the greatest Portuguese writer; a literary giant and an exceptional author*.

Herbert (2001) conceptualised the figure of the literary pilgrim as a devoted and expert reader who experiences the literary place as a “sacred” place. Only one visitor describes a similar experience (and this review provides this section subtitle). However, many visitors mention that the museum experience made them feel closer to the author (49 coding references) and emotional (38 coding references). Indeed, most literary museums “favour a fantasy of immediate intimacy with the author” as they place the visitor “into the imagined presence of the author”, creating “an illusion of intimacy” (Watson, 2020: 21, 227-228). The space, along with the personal possessions and the preservation of the “lived-in” look concur to produce an interplay of fiction and reality that facilitates a sense of closeness to the writer and “the promise that the writer might at any point re-enter the home” (Robinson & Andersen, 2002: 19). In this regard, a reviewer wrote:

This is a well-kept house, where we immediately imagine Camilo and Ana Plácido. The bedroom, the kitchen, the living room... everything translates the soul of this great writer.

These findings echo MacLeod's (2021) research results and Robinson's (2002a) theoretical considerations. They also recall the “escape” dimension of the museum's positive experience and a statement by Falk and Dierking (2011: 16): the museum can offer “something akin to a religious experience” and meet the motivation of experiencing something out of the ordinary everyday life.

4.4. *The state of conservation of the house and the objects is extraordinary, but the professionalism of Mr Reinaldo impressed me the most; a great professional and a good example of competence in public service, he took us all back to the Camilo's era.*

The analysis of the reviews highlights two other elements in the co-creation of the museum experience: the museum's overall organisation and curatorship (54 coding references) and the museum guides (88 coding references).

The museum's organisational and curatorship strategies construct an interpretation of the author's biography and literary work, and their options impact what visitors are allowed to see and interpret. The analysis of this subtheme reveals that most reviewers believe museums are "well-organised", display "interesting" and "tasteful" collections, convey "detailed" information about the authors' life and work, and, in the museums installed in former writers' houses, the buildings are "well-preserved". The comments about the museum organisation often include references to the tour guides and their role in the co-creation of the experience, as in the following example:

The Casa-Museu José Régio was the first house museum I visited. The experience could not have been better! The lady who accompanied us on the tour was super expressive and funny and included our participation in the visit in a spectacular way. The house is full of art with funny anecdotes and organised as José Régio left it. If you have the opportunity, visit.

As stated previously, museum experience is conceptualised as a dual subjective phenomenon (Busby & Shetliffe, 2013), involving the intertwined visitors' unique personal context and the museum's staff, communication strategies, services and physical spatial context. In this context, guided tours and their narratives are a vehicle that enables engagement and understanding of the museum, the house, the writer and the historical context, and reviewers regularly praise their significance and proficiency. The two following reviews set up the pattern in most reviews:

For both fans or not fans, the visit takes us to the time of Camilo Castelo Branco, with the collaboration of the guiding staff that places the visitor as close as to the author's time as possible/ The visit is really worthwhile, the guide was super friendly and told us lots of details about the author's life.

The findings presented up to this point provide an answer to RQ₂ as they refer to the museum attributes that favour a positive perception of the experience: the museum organisation, curatorship, staff, objects (even replicas) and the fact the museum is installed in a former author's dwelling facilitate the co-creation of a learning, authentic and emotional experience in which the sense of feeling close to the author and stepping into the past emerge.

The following section focuses on the categorical variable "disappointment" and provides the answer to RQ₃.

4.5. I think you find very little about Pessoa, you will find his presence much more walking on the streets of Lisbon.

Reviewers' disappointment results from unmet expectations and disharmony between visitors' and museum agendas. Although meeting each visitor's expectations is challenging, museums should be aware of the common tropes of disappointment. Out of the twelve literary museums whose reviews are analysed, six are targeted in what concerns disappointment, and one has a considerably higher number of negative reviews than the others. In these reviews, visitors report disappointment with the tour guides' skills and behaviour (*The guide accompanying the visit has no preparation/The guide was terribly arrogant.*); the high cost of the entrance ticket (*It's so tiny and overcharged!*); the excessive technology (*the museum's multimedia transformed Pessoa into a performing monkey*); the misinformation about opening hours (*The opening hours listed on Google aren't the same as those listed on the door of the*

Casa); the lack of information in other languages than Portuguese (*The Casa is basically a series of empty rooms with information posters all in Portuguese.*); the curatorship options (*He was shy and reclusive whereas the museum's various displays present him as a maverick defined by his strange antics*); the absence of the spirit of the author (*It is worth knowing the place where the poet we admire lived, but the collection lacks many things, and I did not feel the presence of the poet*); the poor quality of the collection (*There was not much to see in this house museum house. An ordinary farmhouse with some old furniture does not make for an unforgettable experience*) and not learning (*Okay if you're a fan, but Wikipedia taught me more*).

Although each of these dimensions of service failure is residual in the data set, they make up for 55 coding references, and the most recurrent complaints gravitate towards the poor quality of the collection and information (28 coding references), the lack of the "spirit" of the author (11), and unskilled tour guides (9). These coding references answer RQ3 and reveal that an unfavourable museum experience is the consequence of visitors not engaging with the experience (via staff, collection and curatorship strategies), which in turn does not foster learning or feeling the presence of the author. Regarding this last aspect, Trubek (2010) claims it is an expected result (although the researcher does not provide empirical data), as the museum is not a product of the author; only the books are. However, the data set analysis reveals that six museums are successful in their endeavour and overcame the challenge of exhibiting the intangible essence of literature and its verbally coded messages (books, manuscripts, studies) through the mediation of objects and verbal codes.

5. Final considerations

This study contributes to understanding visitors' experience at literary museums in Portugal and addresses a gap in the research at a national level. Although the tourist experience is highly idiosyncratic, the analysis and interpretation of visitors' TripAdvisor reviews identify common tropes in the experience of these Portuguese literary places. Firstly, the empirical evidence highlights that the author's objects, curatorship options and guiding staff are critically bi-directional in the outcome of a favourable or unfavourable experience. Secondly, it shows that these visitors' experience emerges as a cognitive and emotional process after the interaction person-museum setting, person-museum objects/staging and person-staff. This means visitors describe their experience based on their cognitive and emotional impacts. The former includes learning about the author's life, work and historical context via the museum setting and staging, which act as triggers to a perception of a sense of authenticity and stepping into the past; the latter entails feeling closer to the author and the emotion it generates. Thirdly, the analysis and interpretation of the data set reveal an overall positive perception of Portuguese literary museums, not only because the favourable attributes are predominant compared to those which trigger disappointment, but because "practical advice for prospective visitors" is the highest frequency subtheme, which previous research has proven to be a categorical variable that acts as an aid to a more direct measuring of a positive museum experience (Su & Teng, 2018; Trinh & Ryan, 2013).

5.1. Theoretical implications

The current study contributes to the literature on visitors' experience at national literary museums and provides empirical support to the seemingly contradictory literature on three topics. The first is the significance of staff interaction. While some researchers conclude this attribute determines a favourable museum experience (Huo & Miller, 2007; Trunfio *et al.*, 2022), others claim the aesthetic and emotional dimensions play a more decisive impact than staff on a positive experience (Lin, 2009). In the current study, staff interaction is a critical bi-directional attribute which determines positive and negative experiences. The second topic refers to multimedia technology as a facilitator of the visitor-museum interaction. While Lin (2009) concludes that interactive multimedia is not valued by visitors, Trunfio *et*

al. (2022) argue that technology impacts (although moderately) a positive evaluation of the visit. In the study presented in this paper, visitors (although a residual number and regarding one of the museums) mentioned that option contributed to a negative experience. The third topic regards complementary museum services (*e.g.*, restaurants and gift shops). While former research confirms they play a crucial part in the perception of a positive experience (Harrison & Shaw, 2014, Roederer & Filser, 2018), other studies state these “peripheral” services “have either no influence or a negative influence on the overall evaluation” (Zanibellato *et al.*, 2015: 86). The museum’s additional services in the current research contribute to a positive experience.

Corroborating previous research findings (Trunfio *et al.*, 2022, Zanibellato *et al.*, 2015), this study identifies the quality of the exhibition as an attribute contributing to favourable and unfavourable experiences and the significance of the “learning” and “escape” dimensions of the museum experience. Finally, the dimension of “enjoyment” identified in the literature produced a low number of coding references in the current study.

5.2. *Practical implications for regional and tourism authorities*

In 2021, Richards (2021) reaffirmed that the combination of culture and tourism in the form of tangible cultural attractions, such as museums, has increased in scale and importance, as culture has become the object of travel for millions of travellers worldwide. Thus, destinations have profited themselves through cultural assets to attract tourist attention and promote uniqueness. One of the findings this research highlights is the absence of literary museums celebrating female poets and novelists. Hence, one practical implication for regional cultural authorities would be the suggestion to create such museums. As cultural and literary products that appeal across markets (not just the literary fans), literary museums are decisive uniqueness factors of destinations (Richards, 2021) and contribute to the economic benefit of regions (Orea-Giner *et al.*, 2021). Another recommendation would be for the VisitPortugal website to include all literary museums, as this platform, along with other similar technology, competes with promotional materials and strongly influence the decision-making process.

5.3. *Practical implications for literary museums*

Museum teams should concentrate on having a systematic feedback mechanism to collect primary (*e.g.*, visitors’ surveys) and secondary sources from the Internet (*e.g.*, TripAdvisor reviews), as these comments and suggestions are invaluable no matter if they are positive or negative (Park & Nicolau, 2015). However, they should note that from the users’ perspective, negative reviews are frequently perceived as more credible and informative, as people tend to avoid loss rather than seek gain (Fang *et al.*, 2016). Thus, although the analysis did not disclose many negative attributes of the experience, Portuguese literary museums should be particularly interested in identifying the disappointing aspects of the visit as they may guide corrective actions. As such, they should focus on improving the museum staff competencies, collection quality, communication (internally and externally) and supplementary services (*e.g.*, gift shops with merchandise and memorabilia). They should also strive to facilitate the presence of the “spirit” of the author, although not necessarily via multimedia technologies, as some reviewers mentioned they had the opposite effect. Research has proven that one attribute’s enhanced performance strongly fosters a positive experience (Forgas-Coll *et al.*, 2017). Thus, if Portuguese literary museums improve at least one of those aspects, they will increase the chances of more favourable visitors’ perception. However, if all are improved, these factors will enhance visitors’ experience, which should be the museums’ “primary organisational goal” (Harrison & Shaw, 2004: 24). Finally, literary museums, as communicators of literary heritage, should also be present online either with their web pages or with a page on TripAdvisor.

5.4. Limitations and future research

Given its exploratory nature, this research has limitations. The first is relying exclusively on TripAdvisor reviews, as data do not represent all visitors. Besides, regarding some museums, the number of reviews is meagre. Thus, future studies should take a holistic perspective and conduct mixed methods research, including the analysis of other online review websites and social media sites complemented with interviews, surveys and participant observation to obtain a deeper understanding of the experience of literary museums. Lastly, the themes extracted from the qualitative content analyses method might not be error-free as this research stems from a subjective classification of reviews. To avoid potential misclassification bias, a future quantitative method is suggested to validate the dimensions of visitors' experience.

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Endnote:

¹ Although there is no comprehensive compiled list of literary museums, there must be hundreds across the world. In the USA there are more than 100 literary museums (Prottas, 2020), 59 in France (Cadeac, 2011), and 50 in the UK (MacLeod, 2021: 2). Prottas (2020) refers to a Wikipedia page with information by country, but the researcher does not testify to its reliability (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_von_Literaturmuseen).

² The author of this study did not include house museum Abel Salazar (reported in Rosa, 2018) for considering that Salazar's primary activities were science, academia and painting.

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