

## Enhancing Inclusivity in Cultural Heritage and Tourism through Technology

**Field of Study :** Management

### SUPERVISORS

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### KEYWORDS

Cultural Heritage, Technology, Tourism, Diversity and Inclusion

### ABSTRACT

For years, research, regulations, and institutions have emphasized enhancing accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities (PwDs) through technology, yet significant challenges remain. In the context of cultural heritage and tourism, addressing these issues requires an understanding of both social and technological factors that impact the acceptance and usability of technology among PwDs, while also ensuring that inclusive innovations reflect the diverse cultural traditions and practices of various communities.

However, there is a noticeable gap in scientific research that bridges the fields of technology, disability, and cultural heritage, tourism. This project delves into the progression of models and theories in technology management, focusing on their relevance to the acceptance and usability of technology by PwDs investigating the potential for preserving and experiencing cultural heritage.

By broadening the range of theoretical frameworks considered, this project enriches the academic discourse and provides essential recommendations for cultural heritage practitioners, managers, and policymakers. It highlights the strategic importance of accessibility and inclusion, not only as ethical imperatives but as central elements in fostering cultural engagement and gaining a competitive edge in preserving heritage.



## Research aims and methodology

This research aims to explore the intersection of technology, disability, and cultural heritage by investigating the development and application of inclusive technological innovations that support people with disabilities. The project focuses on understanding the social and technological factors influencing the acceptance and usability of such technologies, specifically in the context of cultural heritage preservation and engagement. By examining existing models and theories of technology management, this project seeks to identify gaps, challenge ableist assumptions, and propose alternative frameworks/solution that better accommodate the needs of diverse disability categories (physical, sensory, intellectual).

Ultimately, the project aspires to contribute to the academic discourse on accessibility and inclusion within cultural heritage sectors, offering actionable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and managers. It aims to demonstrate that accessibility is not merely a legal or ethical obligation but a strategic advantage in fostering cultural engagement and ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage for all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

To explore those topics, the project will adopt a mixed-methods approach. This approach combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of PwD's perceptions and behaviour, and the effectiveness of technologies in the cultural heritage scenario.

## Relevance and added-value of the proposed research in relation to the current state of knowledge

The current state of knowledge reveals a paucity of research concerning the acceptance and use of the the technology by PwD in the cultural heritage landscape. Therefore, the project can contribute to the actual debate adding value.

This project addresses this gap by investigating how PwD perceive and use the technologies within the context of cultural heritage. Understanding PwD' perceptions is crucial because it directly influences their behavior of the actors (i.e. companies, institutions, etc) in the cultural sector.

The research is focused on different technologies that can be applied an use in the context of cultural heritage/tourism and introduces a modern and practical approach to stakeholders.

## Interdisciplinary nature of the research together with the alignment with the CHORAL programme and complementarity expertise of the teams

This proposal goes in line with the Culture Heritage Hub of Enhancement and Dissemination of cultural and natural heritage, more specific with tourism and valorisation, communication and digitisation and how this might affect in heritage management.

The distinct yet complementary focuses of the two team members are essential for the success of this research.

1. Supervisor ( (Management and Consumer Behaviour): The supervisor brings a strong focus on management and consumer behavior, which is vital for assessing the effectiveness of sustainable practices from an operational standpoint. These expertises complements the director's focus creating the ground of the research in measurable outcomes and statistical analysis. This approach ensures that the research not only explores innovative digital solutions but also evaluates their impact on consumer behavior and destination image through robust quantitative methods. Their management focus also helps in understanding how sustainable practices can be integrated into the broader strategic goals of tourism organisations.



2. Co-Supervisor: Digitalisation and Methodologies Focus): The co-supervisor's expertise in digitalisation and advanced methodologies is crucial for integrating cutting-edge technology into the study. Their focus on digital tools, such as mobile apps and digital marketing strategies, aligns with the need to innovate and modernize sustainable cultural tourism practices. By leveraging their knowledge, the research can effectively explore how digital technologies can promote sustainable practices and enhance tourist experiences. Additionally, the director's methodological skills ensure that the research design is rigorous and capable of producing reliable and actionable insights.

Justification for Complementarity: The combination of these two perspectives creates a well-rounded research team. The co-supervisor's focus on innovation through digitalisation ensures that the research remains forward-thinking and relevant in an increasingly digital world. At the same time, the supervisor's emphasis on management and consumer behavior provides a practical and evidence-based foundation, ensuring that the research results can be applied in real-world settings. Together, they offer a comprehensive approach that balances theoretical innovation with practical implementation, ultimately contributing more effectively to the topic.

## Output plan including publication and dissemination activities

**Objective:** This 3-year plan outlines the research activities, publication strategies, and dissemination efforts to ensure the findings on PwD and technologies in the cultural heritage landscape.

### *Year 1: Research Foundation and Initial Data Collection*

The research begins with an extensive **literature review** to establish a solid theoretical foundation. This step is crucial for understanding the current academic background on PwD and cultural heritage, with a particular focus on the use of technologies. By systematically reviewing the existing literature, the aim is to develop a research framework that merges key aspects of theory, management practice and data analysis.

Following the theoretical groundwork, the research shifts to **qualitative methods**, specifically case studies and/or focus groups with experts. This step will identify prevalent themes and offer deeper insights into the topic. The findings from this stage are intended for presentation at a national conference on tourism, consumer behavior and management.

Next, leveraging on the data collected on the previous step, the research will adopt a **quantitative method** (online survey). This survey will assess PwD's perceptions on the use of technologies and cultural heritage. The output from this phase will be a research note or a methodology paper, outlining the survey design and sharing preliminary findings in an academic journal, contributing to ongoing discussions in the field.

The other stage of the research involves **case studies**. Here, the focus shifts to identifying specific cultural heritage sites and tourism destinations that have implemented technologies that can be used by PwD and understand the results obtained.

This structured approach ensures a comprehensive examination of how digital technologies are being integrated into sustainable cultural tourism, providing both theoretical and practical insights.



## Year 2: Data Collection and Preliminary Analysis

The objective of the second year is to collect data and prepare the full-scale survey. It will be fundamental to identify in a proper way the respondents, have interviews with stakeholders and experts to gain supplementary data.

Moreover, to have a complete overview of the data, case studies can be identified and analyzed more in depth. The expected output is the preparation of papers to be published in an international journal.

## Year 3: Final Analysis, Publications, and Dissemination

The third year has the objective to integrate findings and finalize the research framework. Through the experience gained during the years, it will be organized at least one workshop to present the results to the main stakeholders and actors involved. The ideal output is the publication of a report for managers and companies. Finally, a collection of papers or book chapter outlining the research's contributions to cultural heritage and technologies use by PwDs for enhancing inclusiveness can be realized.

## Ongoing Dissemination Activities Throughout the 3 Years

- **Academic Publications:** Aim to publish at least 3 peer-reviewed journal articles over the course of the research, targeting both tourism, innovation and management journals.
- **Conference Presentations:** Present findings at both national and international conferences at least twice a year from the second year of Phd.
- **Workshops and Webinars:** Host or take part to workshops and webinars to engage with industry stakeholders, ensuring that the research has a practical impact.
- **Social media and Digital Platforms:** Regularly update research progress on social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn) and maintain a project blog or website to disseminate findings in a more accessible format.
- **Collaboration with Industry Partners:** Collaborate with tourism boards, cultural organizations, and technology providers and specific institutions/association to ensure the research findings are implemented in practice.

## Evaluation and Feedback

- **Annual Review Meetings:** Conduct annual review meetings with the research team, external advisors, and stakeholders to assess progress, refine the research plan, and adjust dissemination strategies as needed.
- **Feedback Loops:** Collect feedback from academic peers, industry partners, and conference attendees to continuously improve the research and its practical applications.

This 3-year plan ensures that the research is not only academically rigorous but also widely disseminated and impactful in the real world, fostering sustainable cultural tourism practices across different sectors.

