HerTour4Youth

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Needs Validation Report

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KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Partnerships for creativity

Abstract

HerTour4Youth project arises from a deep reflection on the unheard-of cultural and tourism crisis due to Covid-19 impact. On the grounds of Heritage Tourism acting as a fundamental part of cultural heritage and sustainable tourism making up almost 40% of tourism revenues globally, a wide list of digital initiatives has been taken during the last few years. In particular, advanced technologies (such as 360o photo, Augmented Reality, 3D scanning, etc.) in conjunction with hybrid skills (i.e. technical and non-technical) of businesses' digital transformation have been providing endless possibilities in the field of cultural tourism towards enriching tourists experiences based on cultural heritage. Indeed, there are several examples revealing that heritage tourism is increasingly moving towards a new digital era.

However, the COVID-19 crisis has a massive impact on the tourism-related cultural sector, having shone a light both on the challenges endured by people working in the sector and on how cultural life is weakened by the global lockdown (Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends, 2020). In fact, the pandemic crisis jeopardizes the most crucial parts of cultural tourism (UNESCO, 2020). With almost 13% of museums being under the threat of never re-opening, more than 80% of UNESCO World Heritage properties being locked and most people working on tourism-related jobs being currently unemployed, the need to move towards digitization becomes even more urgent. To that end, new skills are being required among the professional profiles of culture and tourism. It is thus rational for young people seeking job opportunities in the heritage tourism sector to be more equipped with digital competences to form a more resilient tourism workforce (UNWTO, 2020).

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1. Description of target group connected:

For the following report, people actively studying in the field of tourism (hotel management, restaurant management and tourism marketing) were approached through collaboration with the New York College of Athens. A total of 36 printed questionnaires were handed out, of which 33 were valid, due to the other 3 lacking answers partially or completely.

2. Answers Report

Question 1: How old are you?

Ages ranged between 18-28, with most students being the ages of 21-23. This is mostly due to the fact that the population that was approached were 2nd and 3rd year students.
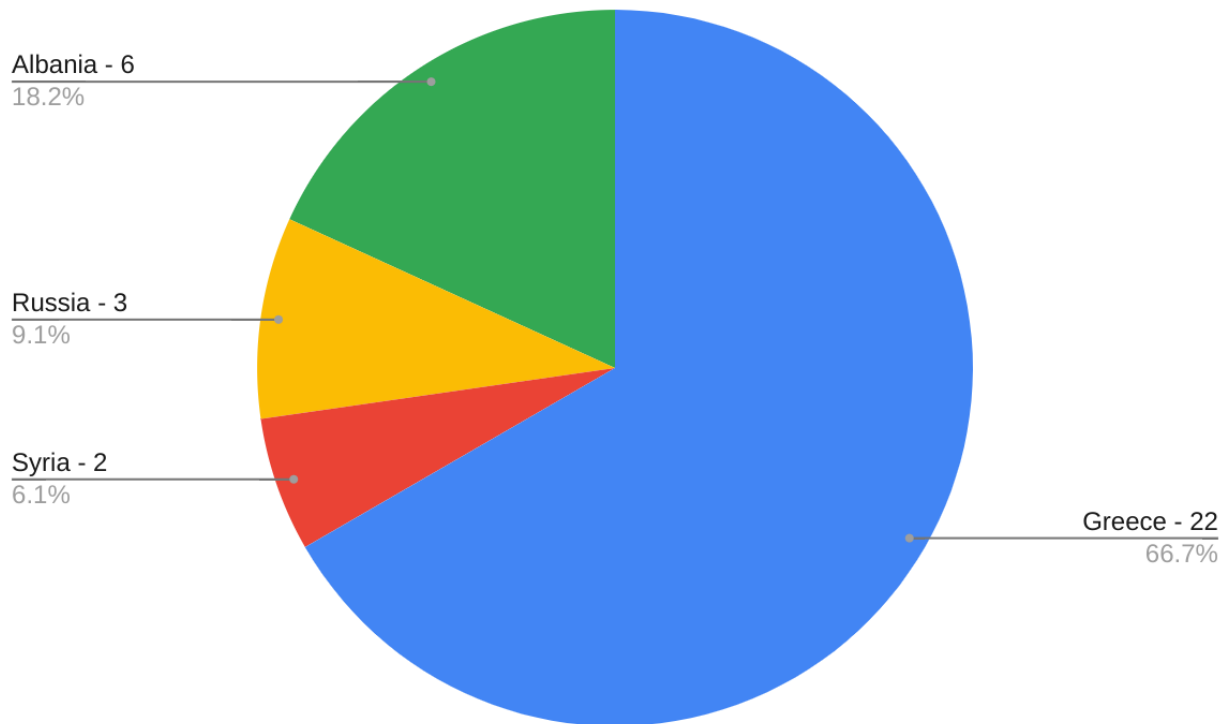
Age of Participants
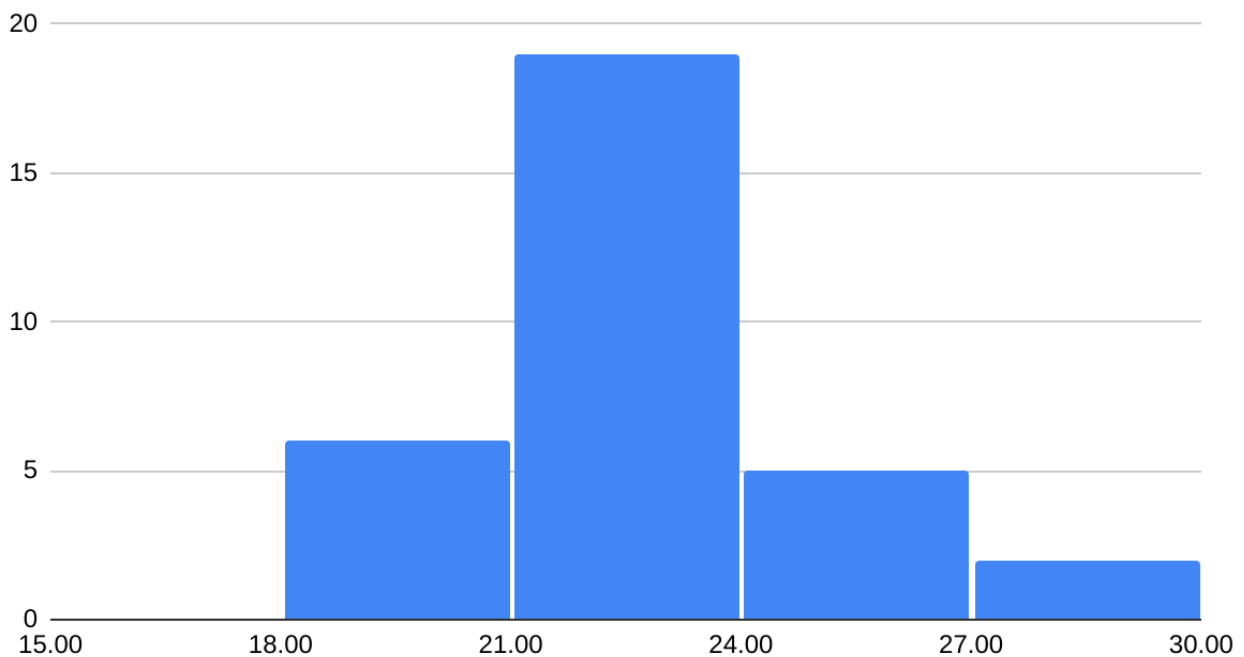
Question 2: What country are you from?

Of the 33 respondents, 22 were Greek, 6 were Albanian, 3 were Russian and 2 were Syrian. It is worth noting that some of the students born in Greece come from multicultural and/or bilingual
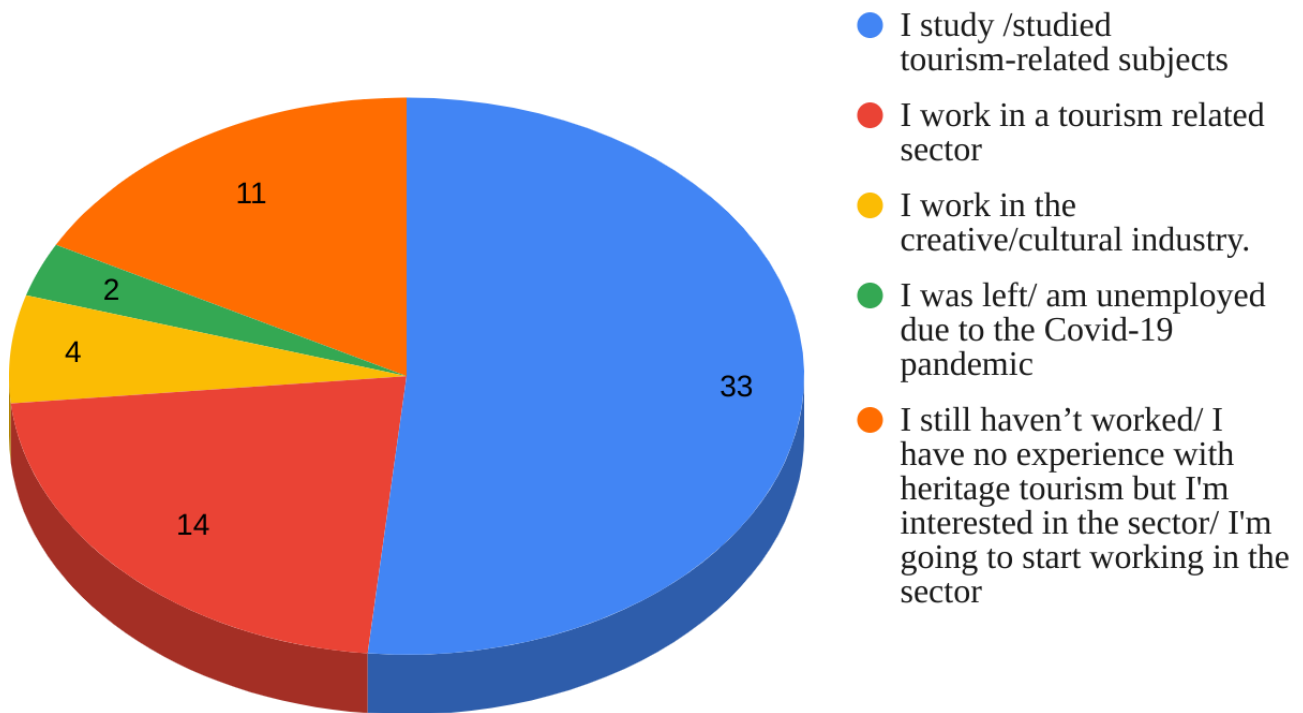
households, so there are likely more ethnicities among the students based on their cultural backgrounds.

Question 3: What kind of experience do you have with heritage tourism?

All of the respondents replied that they studied a subject related to the tourism industry, which was expected due to the sample. Of those, 14 also work in the tourism sector, although it is not clear in what fashion. In Greece, it is common for young people to seasonally work entry level jobs during the summer in restaurants, hotels and bars, without the prospect of further advancement in that field. It is, therefore, likely that there are wildly varying degrees of experience among the participants, with some having steady jobs in the tourism industry and others occasional ones. Due to the young age and limited experience of the participants, not many were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as opposed to older professionals, who may have a higher rate of effect from the pandemic.

Legend:
- I study /studied tourism-related subjects
- I work in a tourism related sector
- I work in the creative/cultural industry.
- I was left/ am unemployed due to the Covid-19 pandemic
- I still haven't worked/ I have no experience with heritage tourism but I'm interested in the sector/ I'm going to start working in the sector

Pie chart values: 33, 14, 4, 2, 11

Question 4: How many years of experience do you have with heritage tourism?

Due to the fact that most participants aren't currently employed, the most common answer was "less than a year", however when only calculating the participants who do have experience (excluding those with 0 years of experience), all 17 people responded 1-5 years. For the purposes of this report, it was deemed that the second calculation is more valuable as it gives more information about the existing experience of the people that do work in the field. We already know from question 3 how many participants are only studying but not working, so these two questions can overlap.

Question 5: Have you received any type of heritage tourism related training?

Of the 33 participants, 22 had received heritage tourism related training.. Upon further analysis and discussion with the university, it was found that the 3rd years had a module dedicated to heritage tourism in the second semester of their second year, while current 2nd years have not yet had that.
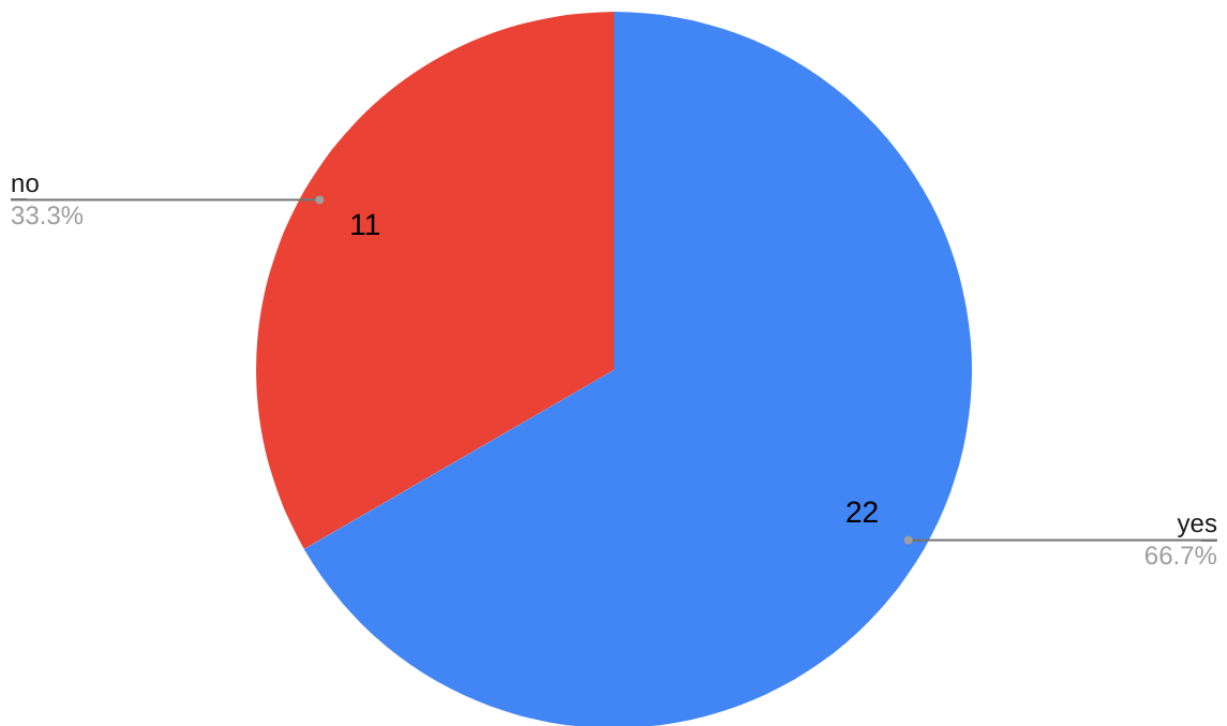
Question 6: If yes, please specify:

All participants simply wrote "university", "course" or "seminar" in this section, however the university gave more information on the module that was given to the students. The module covered heritage maintenance and organization, as well as tour organization and marketing of the heritage site.

Question 7: How would you rate your knowledge from 1 to 5 (where 1 means "no knowledge" and 5 means "I have expert knowledge on this") on the following digital skills.

For the following 3 questions, a single chart will be used (shown below) to compare the answers of the participants. In terms of current skills, there were two patterns that emerged immediately. The first was that participants lacked skills in complex digital skills, such as cybersecurity, programming skills and operating systems, while feeling more competent on matters related to social media and communication. The second was that there was no clear correlation between existing skills and importance or willingness to learn, which indicates that the skills most participants have are not related necessarily to their professional needs, but rather skills that they have developed in their day-to-day activities, such as social media skills.

Question 8: How important do you consider these digital skills to be in the heritage tourism sector from 1 to 5 (where 1 means "not important" and 5 means " very important")

Unlike current skills, there was a clear correlation between importance and the skills that the participants would like to learn. An interesting pattern that emerged was the relatively high importance given to digital skills that the participants generally lacked, such as programming, cybersecurity and digital payment methods. Another interesting aspect was knowledge of operating systems, which while shown to be important, had a significantly low likelihood to be chosen as a skill to be learned, which is discussed further below. A surprising fact was that visual communication was given a relatively low importance rating, which could indicate the need to focus on its importance in a potential curriculum.
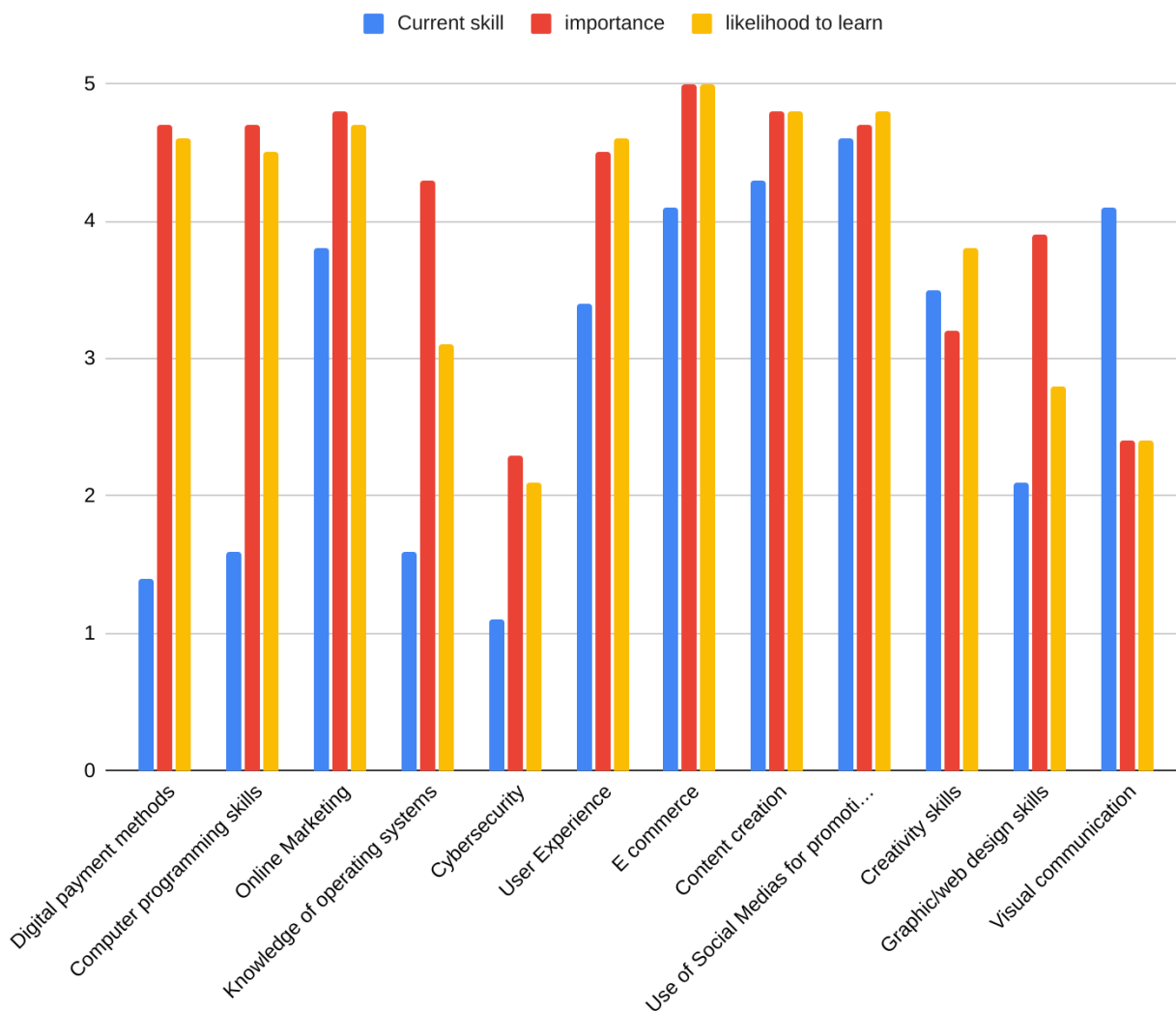
Question 9: What of these digital skills would you like to improve from 1 to 5 (where 1 means "I'm not interested in improving this skill" and 5 means " I'm very likely to improve this skill")

As mentioned above, importance and likelihood to learn were directly correlated for almost all choices. One that stood apart was the correlation between the importance of operating platforms and the participants' likelihood to learn more about them, which was not correlated. This indicated that participants might consider these skills too difficult to pursue, which opens up a wider discussion when designing a curriculum. People with little experience in digital skills might be intimidated at first when trying to tackle them,

It is important for the curriculum to adapt to the existing skills and take into account the above factor, as well as ease the participants into understanding that digital skills are not overly complicated.

Current skill, importance and likelihood to learn

Legend: Current skill, importance, likelihood to learn

Categories: Digital payment methods, Computer programming skills, Online Marketing, Knowledge of operating systems, Cybersecurity, User Experience, E commerce, Content creation, Use of Social Medias for promoti…, Creativity skills, Graphic/web design skills, Visual communication

Question 10. Have you ever received any kind of digital skills training/course?

Of the 33 participants, only one reports having received digital skills training.

Question 11. If yes, specify what the training was about:

The one participant who had received digital skills training, she reported taking coding classes.

Question 12: Which are the main challenges that the heritage tourism sector is facing at moment? (you can choose more than one)

The majority of the participants reported the Covid pandemic as the main challenge, which is expected, however, it is interesting to note that political context was reported as the second main challenge.
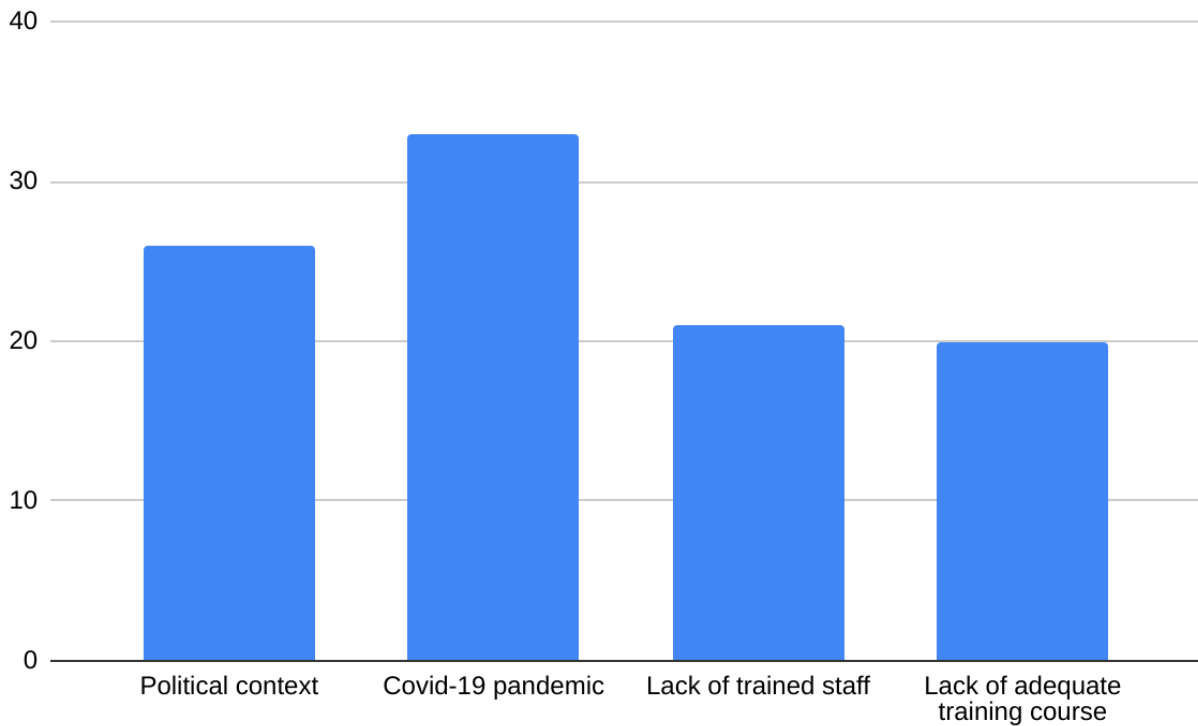
Question 13: Were you directly affected by the Covid 19 pandemic? If yes in what way?

All participants reported that the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted their studied and had them studying remotely. Only a limited amount were otherwise affected, which was expected given that most students participating in the questionnaire are not employed.
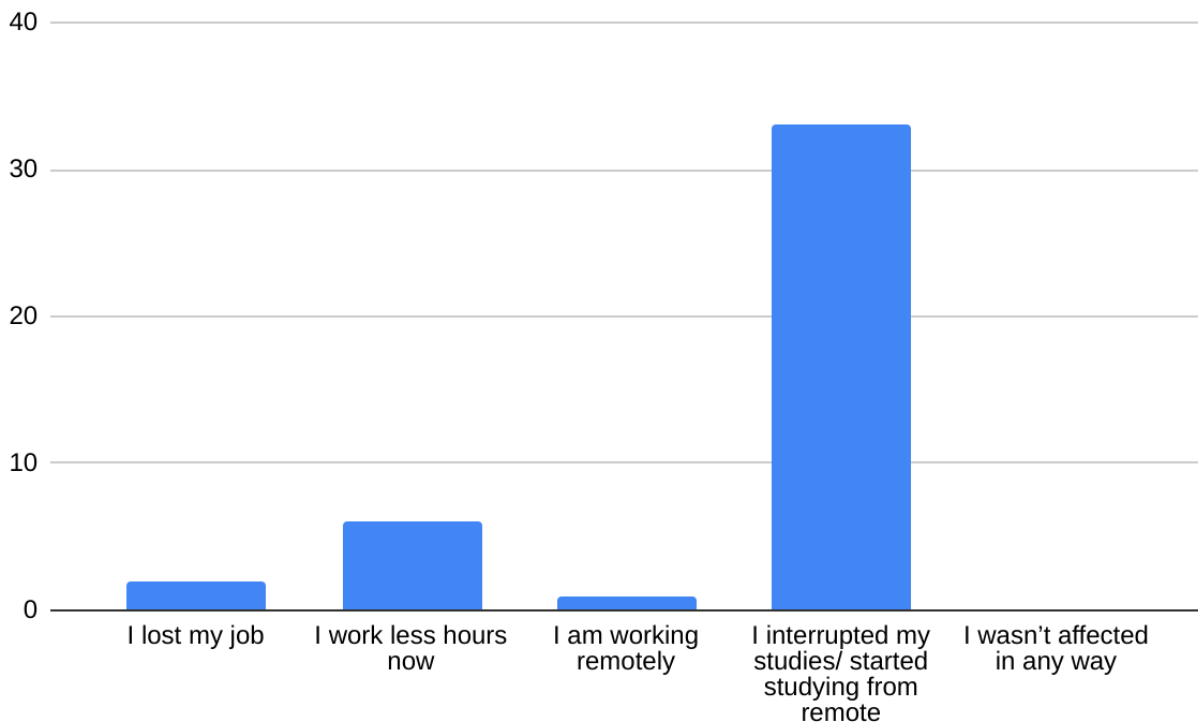
3. Feedback and recommendations

Due to the nature of the sample, some answers were expected, and may not be indicative of the wider population. These are mostly related to the wider employed population in the field of tourism.

What stands out in this questionnaire is the comparisons among current skills, perceived importance and willingness to learn. Specifically, there seems to be a disconnect between the importance of digital skills and the knowledge of the participants. Focus should be given in providing digital skills related to cybersecurity, operational systems, digital payments etc, while at the same time, ensuring that they are presented in a comprehensive manner that does not intimidate the users.

At the same time, another aspect that stands out is that the political context is the second most important challenge in the field of heritage tourism. Due to its wide meaning, political context is difficult to discern at this point, but it can be a subject for further investigation in the future, as to what specifically could be done differently.

Finally, it is important to further the findings of this questionnaire through qualitative data as well, specifically taking what was learned through here and trying to gain deeper understanding on the specifics of each aspect.