Rapport du mémoire de M2
Report of the Master's thesis
Édition (2021—2023)

Étudiant(e)/Student :

Prénom, Nom / First Name, Family Name : Fernanda Schröter Freitas
Titre du mémoire M2 / Title of the Master's thesis : The Impact of Google Maps' Reviews and Algorithms on Erasmus Students' Choices ff Museums to Visit in Prague

Mobilité / Mobility :

Veuillez souligner les établissement !/Please, underline the insititutions !
Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest (ELTE)
École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de Paris (EHESS)
Università degli Studi di Catania (UNICT)
Univerzita Karlova, Prague (CUNI)
Université Laval, Québec (UL)

Directeurs de recherche / Supervisor :

1. Directeur principal / Main supervisor[1] :
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     Position/Affiliation : assistant professor
     Université/University : Univerzita Karlova, Prague (CUNI)

2. 2eme Directeur / 2nd supervisor :
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     Université/University : Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest (ELTE)

(3. 3eme Directeur / 3rd supervisor :)
     Prénom, Nom / First Name, Family Name :
     Position/Affiliation :
     Université/University :

Rapporteur / Referee :

     Prénom, Nom / First Name, Family Name :
     Position/Affiliation :
     Université/University :

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[1] Le directeur principal est le responsable de l'étudiant pour min. une année./ The main supervisor is responsible for the student for at least one year. The second director, who is responsible for the student either in Semester 1 or in Semester 2. (In case of 3 mobilities: the third director is responsible for the student in Semester 3.)

Évaluation/Evaluation:
Veuillez consulter le tableau de conversion ci-dessous !/ Please, consult the grade conversation chart below !

Note dans l'établissement / Grade at the institution:
Note dans le 2eme établissement (ELTE) / Grade at the 2nd institution (ELTE) :
(Note dans le 3eme établissement / Evaluation – grade at the 3rd institution:)
Note TEMA+ / TEMA+ grade:

Rapport / Report (max. 4500 caractères espaces inclus/max. 4500 characters including spaces) :
Veuillez indiquer votre opinion et remarques sur le mémoire M2 !/ Please, indicate your opinion on the Master's thesis !

The thesis deals with the very topical issue of the influence of new media and technologies on the consumption of cultural heritage. Specifically, it asks how Google Maps' reviews influence the decision process of heritage audiences when choosing a heritage site (museum) to visit. It relies on an actor-centric, anthropological perspective, which on the one hand helps to avoid an overly technological-deterministic approach, but on the other hand does not allow for an analysis of the actual role of technology in configuring the user - for this, knowledge of Google's politics and algorithms would be required. The fact that the use of technology is often unconscious, emphasized by the author (see eg. p.90 – students claim not to use GM, but realize they do) clearly illustrates and further strengthens the urgency of these issues.

Fernanda has applied innovative methodological framework which is fully in line with objectives of her research. She applies two-step qualitative analysis is (1) based on a questionnaires focusing on profiling the respondents and mapping their habits concerning the consumption of cultural heritage and use of social media and (2) detailed analysis of their use of GoogleMaps reviews (sort of reverse profiling done by Google) related to "choice – making". Selection of a "sample" for the analysis (Erasmus students in Prague frequenting a university course on local heritage) is sufficiently large (20 questionnaires and 5 interviews), coherent and clearly defined to provide the dataset for meaningful analysis and articulation of clear conclusions. The formulation of the questions and their analysis is grounded in the existing literature and corresponds to the objectives of the thesis and the research questions.

The results of the work clearly confirm the hypothesis that Google maps and new technologies are gradually replacing traditional printed guides, and simultaneously change patterns of valuation of heritage sites by shifting attention from cultural-historical value towards user-friendliness and availability of services. On the other hand, it seems that, although this experience is quite possibly specific to the selected group of respondents, online reviews are still taken as practical advice rather than a comprehensive assessment. Their role in decision-making thus remains rather marginal. However, the way Google's algorithms display cultural heritage sites to users, how they rank them and how they select reviews undoubtedly represents a potential challenge for the future of national or European cultural policy. This is how Google maps formulate a kind of cultural policy of their own (which itself, as mentioned above, due to the availability of data, is not and cannot be the subject of a deeper analysis).

While generally well structured and written, the thesis work cannot be described as absolutely flawless. I am referring to the repetitive discussion of the limits of the chosen approach and its predictive value (the phrase "sample size was small and limited to young adults" appears in the text several times, limitations are discussed explicitly on p. 16, 102, 110). Similarly unnecessary formal error is the double inclusion of the project description in almost identical form - first in the introduction (chapter 1.3 Research aims and question) and then again in chapter 3.4 (research proposal). This is undoubtedly an oversight resulting from the fact that the student submitted part of the thesis a year ago as M1 and subsequently did not edit the text sufficiently. This regrettable practice transpires also in some formulations (eg. on p. 61 wrong use of future tense "once the data is collected it WILL be…). However, these are generally rather minor shortcomings, which do not significantly reduce the overall quality of the text.

A more fundamental problem seems to be the author's otherwise commendable ambition. Some overly bold and ambitious statements ("**seeks to establish a new field of study within cultural heritage and museum studies**", p.16), are also reflected in the structure of the thesis and in the final discussion of its results. There are claims and implications that do not find direct support in the data and reflect the aspirations of the research project rather than the obtained empirical results. This concerns especially the discussion of the "European" cultural policy. The way it is included in the structure of the thesis (somewhat outside of the main theoretical discussion - which seems to eviscerate its importance) does not work very well - it is not clearly connected either to the "data" or to the theory. As a result, it seems somewhat redundant. After all, the term (European) appears 78 times in the thesis, but overwhelmingly in the theoretical, not the empirical parts of the thesis. Given the choice of a research sample (Erasmus – i.e. Europe building scheme although some of the students were non-European) and studied location, this could be actually an interesting point (juxtapose/harmonize impact of European cultural policy and Google Maps as two instruments configuring "heritage consumption" and thus forming – or simply confirming? – "collective memory" of imagined "Europeans"). Unfortunately, the discussion in subsection 5.4 The impact on European culture only summarises Chapter 3 (Chapter 3: The consequences of Google Maps' use on European culture) in a spirit of speculation rather than data analysis.

To sum up, Fernanda wrote a very good thesis and therefore I recommend it for defence with the grade excellent.

Questions :
Veuillez indiquer vos questions à abordes lors de la soutenance !/Please, indicate your questions to be addressed to the student during the thesis defense!
The thesis seems to ignore the ability of users to actually "create" content of GM (i.e. write and rate reviews) – does the author think that GM are design and functioning allows users to actually produce its content?

1) One of the assumptions of the thesis, albeit implicit, is the need to navigate the flood of newly created "commercial museums" created in the process of commercialization of cultural heritage - the so-called "heritigisation." The author mentions "tourist traps". However, for logical reasons she does not analyse this phenomenon in detail. So how do GM reviews affect the perception and competition between "real" museums and institutions?

2) Completely aside, there are various "pop-up" or "online" museums that often use the google maps platform for their existence and represent a new form of heritage consumption enabled by this "technology". Why do they not appear in the analysis? The implicit notion of Google maps as a threat seems to permeate the work. However, the inclusion of these new forms would also highlight the opportunities it offers.

3)
How exactly does the impact of google maps reviews differ from standard printed guides, which are also a form of commercialization of Heritage?

Date, Signature (digital), Stamp

TEMA+ Grade conversion table

ELTE (Hungarian)	EHESS (French)	UNICT (Italian)	CUNI (Czech)	UL (Canadian)	Notes TEMA+
5	16-20 (pas de 19 et 20)	30 (A, Excellent)	A	95-100 (A+, 4,33) 90-94 (A, 4,00) 85-89 (A-, 3,67)	Très bien/Excellent
4	14-15	27-29 (B, Very Good)	B	80-84 (B+, 3,33) 75-79 (B, 3,00) 70-74, B-, 2,67)	Bien/Good
3	12-13	23-26 (C, Good)	C	66-69 (C+, 2,33) 63-65 (C, 2,00) 60-62 (C-, 1,67)	Assez bien/ Amply sufficient
2	10-11	21-22 (D, Satisfactory) 18-20 (E, Sufficient)	D, E	55-59 (D+, 1,33) 50-54 (D, 1,00)	Passable/ Satisfactory/ Almost sufficient
1	0-9	1-17 (F, FX)	F	49 et moins (E, 0,00)	Insuffisant/ Insuficient