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SELECTIVE VISIBILITY AND SYMBOLIC URBAN IDENTITY: MONUMENT INTERPRETATION AND TOURISM NARRATIVES IN CENTRAL ZAGREB

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Abstract

This exploratory study offers a descriptive comparison between the monumental heritage of central Zagreb and tourist guides' self-reported interpretative priorities, combining an inventory of 69 monuments with a survey of 37 licensed guides. Monuments were classified by theme and physical representation. The survey explored reported inclusion priorities, perceived importance for Zagreb's identity, and explanations of interpretative choices. Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures form the largest inventory category (26.1%). Among respondents, 21.6% selected this category among those they most frequently interpret, and 48.6% considered it important for Zagreb's identity. Historical Figures were selected most often for reported inclusion (81.1%). Selective visibility is used as a descriptive framework; no statistical association between inventory and survey data was tested. The small, non-probability sample limits generalisability. Actual tour content and visitor perceptions were not measured. The findings highlight issues relevant to cultural tourism product development, guide education, and destination management.

Keywords: heritage interpretation, tourist guides, tourism narratives, selective visibility, symbolic landscapes, tourism management, Zagreb

1. INTRODUCTION

Public monuments represent one of the most visible manifestations of symbolic urban space. Beyond their commemorative role, monuments shape

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collective memory, spatial identity and the ways cities narrate themselves to both residents and visitors (Azaryahu, 1996; Bellentani & Panico, 2016; Cosgrove, 1998). Through their thematic orientation, position within the city and symbolic meanings, monuments become active elements of urban landscapes that communicate dominant social values, historical narratives and collective identity. As such, they form part of the city's symbolic geography and influence how urban space is understood, experienced and represented.

Within tourism contexts, monuments acquire an additional interpretative dimension. Their meanings are communicated not only through physical presence but also through guided tours, promotional narratives and storytelling practices. Tourist guides therefore function not merely as transmitters of information but as interpreters who mediate how cultural heritage is presented to visitors through narrative selection, contextualisation and audience adaptation (Ababneh, 2018; Karacaoğlu, 2024). Through these interpretative practices, certain monuments and narratives become more prominent within tourism experiences than others. Through processes of narrative selection, simplification and symbolic filtering, some monuments become central to a city's tourism image while others remain marginalised despite their symbolic significance (Howard, 2003).

Existing scholarship has extensively examined monuments as instruments of collective memory, ideological representation and cultural heritage (Edensor, 1997; Macdonald, 2009; Perkov et al., 2024). Research has also explored the role of tourist guides in shaping visitor experiences and mediating heritage interpretation (Feldman & Skinner, 2018; Io & Hallo, 2012; Salazar, 2007).

However, relatively few studies have directly examined how the symbolic structuring of urban monumental landscapes is reproduced for visitors through tourism interpretation. Research on tour guiding and heritage interpretation shows that interpretation is selective and constitutive of visitor experience (Salazar, 2007; Io & Hallo, 2012; Feldman & Skinner, 2018), while work on post-socialist urban space shows that monuments, civic landscapes and socialist-era built forms are key sites where historical memory, urban identity and political symbolism are negotiated (Czepczyński, 2017; Diener & Hagen, 2013; Naumov & Weidenfeld, 2019; Ochkovskaya & Gerasimenko, 2018; Yusupova & Pfoser, 2023).

A smaller body of work connects these strands more explicitly by examining communist heritage tours, statue parks and tourism representations of socialist urban pasts (Adie et al., 2017; Carnegie & Kociatkiewicz, 2022; Sima, 2017; Stach, 2021).

Central Zagreb offers a useful case because its inventory contains a substantial number of literary, scientific, artistic and allegorical monuments alongside politically and nationally significant works. This thematic diversity provides a basis for examining how different monument categories are

represented in guides' reported narratives. Yet guides' reported narratives may not reproduce this symbolic complexity in full.

Recent tourism studies have addressed several dimensions relevant to destination management. Breščić (2025) examines cycling tourism development in Istria from the perspective of local stakeholders, focusing on cooperation, education, local population involvement and the perceived economic, environmental and sociocultural effects of tourism development. Štilić et al. (2025) assess experts' views of AI-generated travel itineraries and discuss how these tools may change the role of travel agents. Their findings also underline the continuing need for human oversight and professional judgement. Vujović et al. (2026) examine how employees in Serbian tourism enterprises evaluate environmental responsibility, resource use, work instructions, and supervisory monitoring. Their analysis relates these evaluations to employees' age, education and income. Together, these studies show that recent tourism research addresses not only destination development and technological innovation but also the role of people and professional practices in shaping tourism services.

This study is grounded in cultural and tourism geography and addresses a question relevant to tourism management: how the thematic composition of monumental heritage in central Zagreb compares with the categories licensed tourist guides report including in guided-tour narratives. Although previous research has examined Zagreb's monuments in their social, spatial, and historical context (Perkov et al., 2024), empirical research in Croatia linking the thematic structure of urban monuments with their reported representation in tourist guides' narratives appears limited, based on the literature reviewed here. This exploratory study addresses this gap by combining a field inventory of 69 monuments with a survey of 37 licensed tourist guides. It provides a descriptive account of the inventory's thematic categories alongside participating guides' reported inclusion priorities, views on the importance of categories for Zagreb's urban identity, and explanations of their interpretative choices.

The findings are relevant to tourism product management because they identify issues to consider when developing thematic tours, interpretative materials, and guide training. They may also inform cooperation among guides, cultural institutions, and destination managers in developing the cultural tourism offer. The inventory and survey are compared descriptively at the category level. Inventory percentages refer to monuments, while survey percentages refer to respondents; the comparison does not test a statistical association or measure actual inclusion of individual monuments on tours.

In this study, selective visibility is used as a descriptive framework for interpreting which monument categories and meanings participating guides report giving attention to, considered in the context of the inventory's thematic composition. It is not proposed as a new theoretical concept or a tested explanatory model, and it does not imply deliberate exclusion. This framework is informed by broader discussions of heritage representation, narrative mediation,

and contested heritage. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How is monumental heritage in central Zagreb distributed across thematic categories and types of physical representation?

RQ2: Which monument categories do participating licensed tourist guides report including most frequently in their interpretations and which categories do they consider important for Zagreb's urban identity?

RQ3: What practical, narrative and audience-related considerations emerge from respondents' accounts of monument interpretation, audience adaptation and reported omission?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Monuments and Symbolic Urban Landscapes

Monuments are not only objects that commemorate the past and occupy places in the city; they also mark important locations and show how societies understand their history, identity and values. According to Cosgrove (1998), symbolic landscapes are spaces through which social groups communicate dominant narratives and ideas about identity. As part of these landscapes, monuments help shape urban space by expressing ideas about belonging, historical continuity and cultural legitimacy in the physical environment. Edensor (1997) extends this framework by demonstrating how commemorative places are woven into contested national memory.

The meanings of monuments extend beyond their material form. Their symbolic significance emerges through spatial placement, political context, public visibility and social interpretation (Bellentani & Panico, 2016). Monumental landscapes therefore reflect selective representations of history and identity rather than neutral reproductions of the past (Azaryahu, 1996). Through processes of commemorative selection, particular individuals, events and values become spatially privileged while others remain absent, a dynamic that Macdonald (2009) identifies as central to the politics of heritage representation. Urban monumental landscapes therefore function as systems of symbolic communication influencing public understandings of the city, collective memory and symbolic urban identity (Perkov et al., 2024). Public sculptures may acquire multiple and contested meanings depending on the groups and contexts through which they are interpreted. A monument classified as artistic, literary, or allegorical may also carry national, political, or exclusionary associations. The categories used in this study identify the monument's primary commemorative subject. They are analytical categories and are not intended to capture all possible meanings or interpretations of a monument. This analytical classification does not deny that monuments may acquire multiple, contested, and changing meanings (Jelinčić & Reap, 2022).

2.2. Tourism Interpretation and Narrative Mediation

Tourism interpretation plays a central role in transforming monumental heritage into meaningful visitor experiences. Howard (2003) argues that heritage acquires significance through socially mediated processes of valuation and interpretation. However, interpretation is not a neutral process of information transfer. Tourism narratives shape urban meanings by emphasising certain monuments and stories while overlooking others.

Tourist guides occupy a particularly important position within this process. Through storytelling practices, contextualisation and audience adaptation, guides mediate between the physical landscape and visitors' perceptions of urban identity (Karacaoğlu, 2024). Ababneh (2018) emphasises that heritage interpretation should move beyond the mere transmission of factual information and incorporate broader historical, social and cultural contexts. Integrating personal stories, local meanings and spatial context can transform monuments from static commemorative objects into meaningful elements of visitor experience. Consequently, tourism interpretation often privileges historically legible and emotionally accessible narratives over more complex symbolic meanings. This selective mediation has important geographical implications: the tourism image of the city emerges not simply from the existence of monuments but from the interpretative frameworks through which they are communicated, a process Mitchell (2000) identifies as the social production of landscape meaning.

Heritage interpretation involves selecting not only which heritage objects are presented, but also which meanings and historical associations are foregrounded. This process can produce different narratives of the same heritage. In their study of Mormon heritage, Olsen and Timothy (2002) note that “different groups may interpret the same heritage differently depending on what their goals are and who their markets are” (p. 8). Their analysis shows that some interpretations emphasise celebratory aspects of the past, while others give greater attention to difficult or contested themes. Zhu (2015) shows that experts may understand heritage differently from the people who practise and experience it. This means that the official presentation of heritage may not include all the meanings that local people attach to it. This is relevant to selective visibility because some meanings may receive more attention than others.

In this study, selective visibility is used as a descriptive framework to describe differences in how often guides report including particular monument categories and meanings in their guided narratives. The inventory provides information about the monuments and their thematic categories, while the survey records which categories guides say they include, which they consider important, and how they explain their interpretative choices. These sources are analysed together, but they do not measure the same thing. Selective visibility may result from practical constraints, audience familiarity, the ease of explaining a narrative

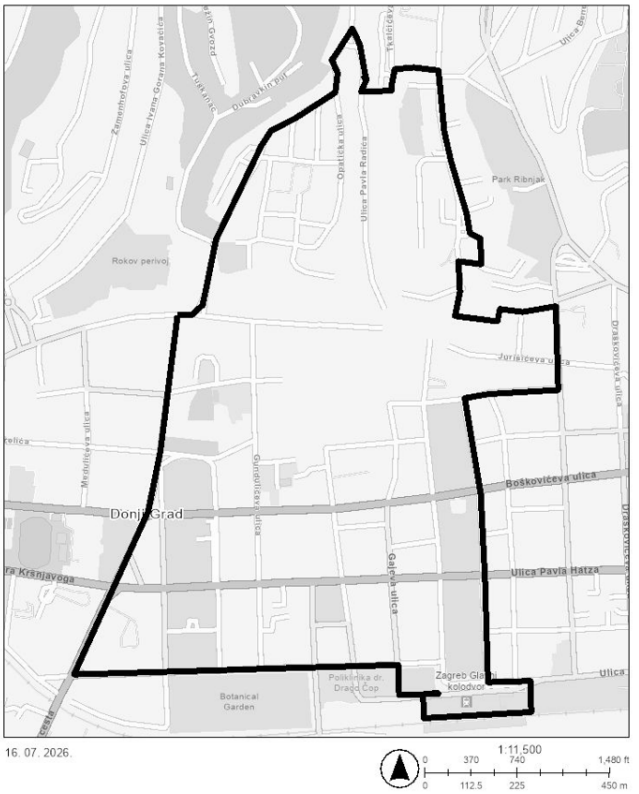
or professional judgement, but it does not necessarily mean that guides deliberately exclude particular monuments or meanings.

3. DATA AND METHODS

3.1. Study Area

The research focuses on the central area of Zagreb (Figure 1), encompassing the historic core with a high concentration of monuments, cultural institutions, tourist activity and symbolic urban functions. This area, bounded by the Green Horseshoe ensemble, the Cathedral, Dolac market and the principal public squares, represents the most intensively interpreted part of the city and provides an appropriate setting for analysing the relationship between symbolic urban landscapes and tourism interpretation.

Figure 1 Study Area



Source: Author's elaboration based on the Esri Topographic basemap.

3.2. Monument Inventory

A systematic field inventory of public monuments within the defined area was conducted, building on the catalogue by Perkov et al. (2024) and supplemented by direct fieldwork in July 2025 to verify spatial placement, physical condition and recent additions. Monuments were defined as sculptural representations in public space with a recognisable commemorative function, including full-figure statues, busts, reliefs and allegorical works. Elements without a clear commemorative purpose were excluded. A total of 69 monuments were verified through direct field survey.

Each monument was classified according to two dimensions: (1) thematic category, based on the dominant social role and cultural contribution of the depicted subject or symbolic content; and (2) physical representation type. Thematic categories included Historical Figures; Literature and Language; Science and Innovations; Art; Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures; Social and Labour Figures; Religious Figures; and Literary and Folkloric Characters. For this analysis, the author classified all 69 monuments according to their main commemorative theme. When a person had more than one role, the monument was classified according to the role highlighted by its inscription or dominant cultural perception within the local social context. Therefore, the coding does not imply that the categories are politically neutral or that individual monuments have only one possible meaning. For example, Petar Preradović was both a general and a poet. His monument was placed in the Literature and Language category because the inscription describes him as a Croatian poet.

Definitions of the thematic categories and physical types, together with the full monument inventory and assigned categories are provided in the Appendix (Table 3).

3.3. Guide Survey

A survey was conducted among licensed tourist guides authorised to operate in Zagreb's urban area, between 1 and 15 July 2025 via Google Forms. Purposive sampling was applied to reach this defined and numerically limited professional population, supplemented by snowball sampling. The survey received 37 valid responses from an estimated population of 622 licensed guides. The open-ended responses provide qualitative insight into participating guides' reported interpretative practices, and the exploratory study provides a basis for future comparative research. Given the small, non-probability sample, the findings cannot be statistically generalised to all licensed tourist guides in Zagreb. The questionnaire was designed to capture several dimensions of tourist guides' interpretative practice. Closed questions addressed respondents' professional experience, work arrangements, guiding frequency, information sources, reported omission of monument interpretations, monument categories included in tours, the use of symbolic interpretation, categories considered important for Zagreb's

identity, audience adaptation and the perceived need for additional training. The questionnaire also included multiple-response items and a five-point Likert-scale covering five statements about monument interpretation and tourism.

Open-ended questions invited respondents to describe the language they commonly use when interpreting Zagreb's monuments, explain differences in interpretation for domestic and foreign visitors, identify a personally interesting monument and explain their choice and suggest changes to the interpretation of monumental heritage.

Descriptive statistics were used to characterise the sample and summarise response distributions. The author manually reviewed the open-ended responses and grouped them into thematic categories based on their content. These categories covered audience adaptation, symbolic interpretation, narrative selection and practical constraints affecting monument interpretation. Quotations were then selected from these categories to help explain the quantitative findings, including responses that supported the observed patterns and those that offered contrasting perspectives. Because the study relies on self-reported survey responses, the findings describe guides reported interpretative practices rather than observed tour behaviour. The study does not directly measure visitors' perceptions, recall or evaluations of guided tours.

The inventory and survey use the same thematic categories, allowing a descriptive comparison between the composition of monumental heritage and participating guides' reported interpretative priorities. Inventory percentages refer to 69 monuments, whereas survey percentages refer to 37 respondents. The analysis does not statistically test the association between the two.

4. RESULTS

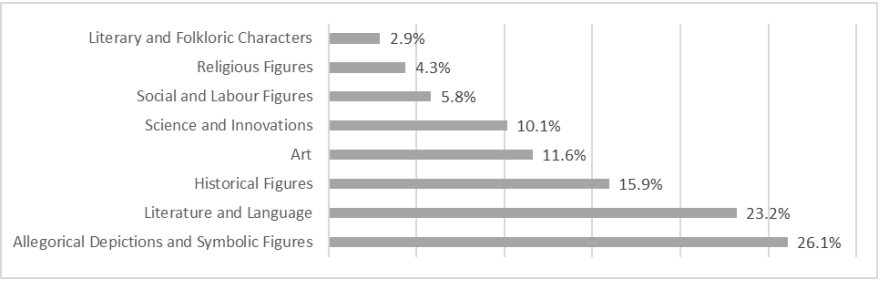
4.1. Monumental Heritage Structure in Central Zagreb

The monumental landscape of central Zagreb (Figure 2) indicates a strong civic and cultural dimension in central Zagreb, reflected in the presence of allegorical, literary, scientific and artistic monuments. This pattern coexists with politically and nationally significant monuments. Within the surveyed inventory, cultural, intellectual and civic themes are more prominent than monuments classified as Historical Figures.

The largest thematic group consists of Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures (18; 26.1%). This category includes works that communicate philosophical, civic, historical, or symbolic meanings without depicting a specific historical person. Works such as Ivan Kožarić's The Grounded Sun and Ivan Meštrović's The Well of Life and History of the Croats articulate abstract values embedded in the urban fabric, suggesting an orientation toward civic reflection rather than political glorification. Literature and Language is the second largest category (16; 23.2%), with figures such as Antun Gustav Matoš, Petar

Preradović, Tin Ujević and Marija Jurić Zagorka spatially embedding literary heritage into the civic landscape. Scientific and artistic monuments further reinforce this orientation, with the monuments to Nikola Tesla, Ruđer Bošković and Andrija Mohorovičić positioning scientific achievement within the symbolic geography of the city. Historical Figures constitute the third-largest thematic category in the inventory, comprising 11 of the 69 monuments (15.9%).

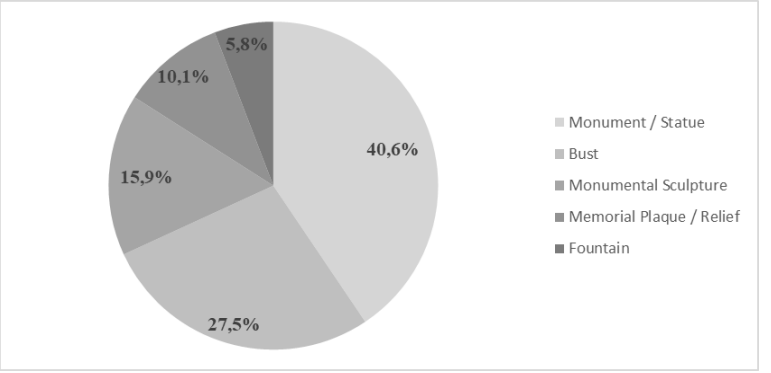
Figure 2 Structure of Monumental Heritage in Central Zagreb by Thematic Categories and Their Share



Source: Author's fieldwork (2025) based on Perkov et al. (2024)

An analysis by physical representation type (Figure 3) reveals the dominance of classical forms: full-body statues (40.6%) and busts (27.5%), providing strong anchors for biographical narrative. The presence of monumental sculpture (15.9%) comprising abstract and symbolically layered works is significant for tourism mediation, as these require contextual interpretation rather than simple biographical narration, producing a multilayered landscape supporting multiple interpretative possibilities.

Figure 3 Share of Monuments by Type of Representation in the Central Area of Zagreb



Source: Author's own research (2025)

4.2. Tourist Guide Survey: Sample Characteristics

Of the 37 respondents, 64.9% had six or more years of guiding experience (32.4% with 6–10 years; 32.4% with over 10 years), with the remainder distributed between 2–5 years (18.9%) and less than two years (16.2%). Most worked primarily as freelance guides (56.8%), while 27.0% combined employment formats and 16.2% operated through agencies, indicating substantial professional autonomy. Regarding tour frequency, 35.1% guided through the city centre several times a week and a further 27.0% several times a month, confirming the spatial centrality of the study area in professional guiding practice.

4.3. Thematic Priorities and Narrative Selection

Table 1 shows differences in how often respondents selected each monument category among those they most frequently include in their interpretations. Historical Figures were the most frequently selected category in the question asking which monument groups respondents most often include in their interpretations (30 respondents; 81.1%). Science and Innovations followed with 19 respondents (51.4%) and Art with 18 (48.6%). Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures form the largest category in the monument inventory (18 of 69; 26.1%). In the survey, eight guides (21.6%) selected this category among those they most frequently include in their interpretations, while seven (18.9%) selected Social and Labour Figures.

The largest positive descriptive difference was observed for Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures: 18 respondents (48.6%) selected this category as important for Zagreb's urban identity, whereas eight (21.6%) selected it among the categories they most frequently include in their interpretations. The difference was 27.0 percentage points. For Art, the corresponding counts were 26 (70.3%) and 18 (48.6%), giving a difference of 21.6 percentage points. Literary and Folkloric Characters showed a negative difference of −8.1 percentage points: 13 respondents (35.1%) selected this category as important, while 16 (43.2%) selected it among those they most frequently include. These differences compare answers to two survey questions within the same sample; they do not compare survey responses with the monument inventory or establish why respondents select particular categories.

Table 1 Monument Categories Included in Tourist Guide Narratives and Their Perceived Importance for Zagreb's Urban Identity (n = 37)

Thematic Category	Most frequently included (n)	Most frequently included (%)	Important for Zagreb's Urban Identity (n)	Important for Zagreb's Urban Identity (%)	Descriptive difference (pp)
Historical Figures	30	81.1%	32	86.5%	+5.4
Science and Innovations	19	51.4%	21	56.8%	+5.4
Art	18	48.6%	26	70.3%	+21.6
Literary and Folkloric Characters	16	43.2%	13	35.1%	-8.1
Literature and Language	15	40.5%	18	48.6%	+8.1
Religious Figures	12	32.4%	14	37.8%	+5.4
Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	8	21.6%	18	48.6%	+27.0
Social and Labour Figures	7	18.9%	9	24.3%	+5.4

Notes: The descriptive difference is calculated as the percentage selecting a category as important for Zagreb's urban identity minus the percentage selecting it among the categories most frequently included in their interpretations. Differences were calculated from the underlying counts using n = 37 and rounded to one decimal place. Positive values indicate that perceived importance exceeded reported inclusion; negative values indicate the reverse. These differences are descriptive and do not establish statistical significance or explain individual respondents' choices. Three respondents (8.1%) selected the separate option indicating that they do not specifically include monuments.

Source: Author's survey of licensed tourist guides (July 2025).

4.4. Symbolic Interpretation and Professional Attitudes

Among the 37 guides, 15 (40.5%) regularly include symbolic interpretations in their tours, 17 (45.9%) do so occasionally and only 5 (13.5%) rarely. Regarding selective omission, 24 guides (64.9%) acknowledged having omitted the interpretation of a monument when they judged it unsuitable for a particular audience, with 11 (29.7%) having done so multiple times, indicating that guides report making audience or context-based interpretative choices.

Attitudinal responses (Table 2) reveal the highest agreement for the statement that symbolism, not just facts, is important in monument interpretation (M = 4.30, SD = 0.78), with 18 respondents (48.6%) awarding the maximum score. Agreement was similarly strong for the statement that Zagreb's monuments reflect the city's cultural identity (M = 4.11, SD = 0.74). Mean agreement was more moderate for the statement that existing guiding resources include monuments sufficiently (M = 3.32, SD = 0.97). They showed a similarly modest level of agreement that monuments are insufficiently recognised as storytelling tools (M = 3.19, SD = 1.00). Professional and scientific literature was the main source of information for 16 guides (43.2%), while 8 (21.6%) relied on personal field research and a further 8 (21.6%) on oral tradition and local stories.

Table 2 Tourist Guides' Attitudes toward Monument Interpretation (Likert Scale 1–5; n = 37)

Statement	Mean	SD	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)	Score 5 (n)
Zagreb's monuments reflect the city's cultural identity.	4.11	0.74	78.4%	12
It is important to include symbolism, not just facts, when interpreting monuments.	4.30	0.78	81.1%	18
Existing guiding resources include monuments sufficiently.	3.32	0.97	43.2%	4
Tourists show interest in monumental heritage.	3.27	1.02	40.5%	4
Monuments are insufficiently recognised as storytelling tools.	3.19	1.00	37.8%	3

Source: Author's survey of licensed tourist guides (July 2025).

4.5. Audience Adaptation and Differential Representation

Nineteen respondents (51.4%) reported interpreting monuments differently for domestic and foreign visitors in some respects, while eight (21.6%) reported substantial differences. Three respondents (8.1%) reported using the same content for both audiences. Five (13.5%) did not guide both types of groups and two (5.4%) were unsure or had not considered the issue. Percentages refer to the full sample of 37 respondents.

Qualitative responses illuminate the mechanisms of this adaptation. One respondent described the strategy: *"Domestic tourists relate to a greater number of shared references, whereas with foreign visitors I avoid local references and instead provide more comparative information relevant to their country of origin."* Another articulated the depth dimension: *"In the length of the explanation - you don't need to explain who Josip Jelačić is to domestic visitors, but also in the depth, to a foreigner, the song Ustani, bane means nothing. However, if Ban Jelačić is adorned with a cravat on 18 October, then two monuments are symbolically linked."*

4.6. Qualitative Explanations of Selective Visibility

Open-ended responses most frequently referred to time constraints, audience familiarity and narrative accessibility as factors shaping monument interpretation. One respondent described how practical pressures directly constrain the depth of interpretation: "*Sometimes due to the itinerary, guests do not have enough time in Zagreb. If they are passing through and want shopping, lunch and a tour in three hours, the interpretation itself becomes very superficial, but I have no choice*." Others reported systematically reducing attention to literary and symbolic monuments when guiding foreign visitors, on the grounds that these categories require extensive contextual explanation and lack internationally recognisable reference points: "*With foreign visitors, I do not go into as much detail and I sometimes skip monuments altogether if there is no relevant connection. For example, I often skip writers or limit their mention to a*

single sentence." These responses suggest that the Literature and Language category may receive less reported interpretative attention, particularly when guides address foreign visitors. Regarding further professional development, 26 guides (70.3%) considered additional training in monument symbolism and interpretation necessary, eight (21.6%) were unsure and three (8.1%) did not consider it necessary. A further respondent articulated how the same monument carries fundamentally different narrative weight depending on audience: "*To Italian guests I highlight the influence of Venetian culture, to German guests I try to emphasise German innovation in our country and to Austrians - well, that's self-explanatory. I only talk about the good and even better aspects of our cultural encounters.*" This statement suggests an affirmative form of narrative framing in which positive aspects of cultural encounters are prioritised. Olsen and Timothy (2002) provide a relevant conceptual comparison by documenting differences between heritage interpretations that foreground celebratory narratives and those that address more difficult historical themes. However, the present statement does not establish that Zagreb guides systematically omit contested histories. Identifying such omissions would require direct analysis of tour narratives and the historical topics they include or exclude. These accounts suggest that participating guides consider practical constraints, audience familiarity, and the ease of explaining particular narratives when selecting monuments for interpretation. These considerations may help explain the reported difficulties in interpreting literary monuments and suggest questions for further research on allegorical monuments.

A further respondent highlighted the importance of experiential appeal in shaping interpretative priorities: "*I can interpret as much as I want, but thirty seconds of watching the Cravat Regiment fascinates visitors more than touring twenty public monuments*." This observation suggests that tourism visibility is influenced not only by symbolic significance but also by the experiential and emotional immediacy of heritage elements.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings provide a descriptive comparison of the monument inventory and participating guides' reported interpretative priorities. Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures form the largest inventory category, while Historical Figures were selected most often by respondents among the categories they most frequently interpret. This comparison concerns the structure of heritage and reported priorities within the sample, rather than observed tour content or the practices of all Zagreb guides. The study's main contribution is to bring these two perspectives together, showing which monument categories are present in the study area and which participating guides report prioritising in their interpretations.

5.1. Zagreb's Monumental Landscape as Civic-Symbolic Geography

The inventory shows a substantial presence of allegorical, literary, scientific and artistic monuments in central Zagreb. These categories may also carry political and national meanings. Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures constitute 26.1% of the inventory, while literary figures add a further 23.2%, together comprising nearly half of all monuments in the study area. This configuration aligns with Cosgrove's (1998) conception of landscape as a symbolic medium communicating cultural identity and civic belonging, rather than simply as a neutral spatial backdrop.

The prominence of civic, cultural, literary, and scientific categories in the central Zagreb inventory can be situated alongside research showing that monuments and memorial landscapes in other post-socialist and post-Soviet settings can be closely connected to national, political, ethnic, or war-related narratives (Koblížková & Hána, 2023; Naumov & Weidenfeld, 2019; Yusupova & Pfoser, 2023; Carnegie & Kociatkiewicz, 2022). However, the present study does not provide a systematic cross-city comparison. Within the Zagreb inventory, cultural and literary representation is prominent, although it coexists with politically and nationally significant monuments (Perkov et al., 2024). This thematic structure is analytically relevant to understanding how Zagreb's urban identity is represented and which narratives may be mobilised in cultural tourism.

5.2. Tourism Interpretation as Selective Symbolic Mediation

The largest positive descriptive difference concerns Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures. 18 respondents (48.6%) selected this category as key to representing Zagreb's identity, while 8 (21.6%) selected it among the categories they most frequently include in their interpretations. The difference of 27.0 percentage points compares responses to these two questions; it does not measure the frequency of actual tour inclusion or establish the reasons for the difference.

The findings do not suggest that all interpretative omissions represent deliberate symbolic filtering. Respondents linked some omissions to time constraints, audience familiarity, route structure, and other practical considerations. The descriptive framework allows these reported considerations to be discussed without assuming deliberate exclusion or establishing their effects. From a broader symbolic perspective, this finding supports arguments that public visibility is itself socially negotiated rather than automatically determined by physical presence. This descriptive comparison places guides' reported interpretative priorities within the context of the monumental heritage present in central Zagreb. Although Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures constitute the largest thematic group within the study area, only 8 of the 37 surveyed guides (21.6%) selected them among the categories they most frequently include in their interpretations. Thus, the largest category in the

inventory was not the category most frequently selected by participating guides as an interpretative priority.

As noted by Perkov et al. (2024), drawing on Jansen's framework of symbolic prominence, valence and ownership, commemorative landscapes reflect struggles over which meanings become publicly dominant. While this argument is developed in relation to public symbolism and political memory rather than tourism, it provides a useful basis for interpreting tourism narration as one arena in which such symbolic hierarchies may be reproduced and reinforced.

This pattern reflects what Ababneh (2018) identifies as the dominant tendency toward interpretative efficiency in guiding practice: guides tend to prioritise monuments that can be contextualised quickly through nationally recognisable historical narratives or emotionally immediate storytelling. Allegorical monuments require contextual depth, symbolic literacy and extended interpretative framing, resources constrained by tour time limitations and audience familiarity. Reported interpretative choices may function as a mechanism through which some aspects of Zagreb's symbolic identity become more prominent than others in guided narratives. In Mitchell's (2000) terms, this can be understood as part of the social production of landscape. These findings suggest that the Zagreb presented in guided narratives may not fully reflect the diversity of the city's monumental landscape.

5.3. Audience Adaptation in Monument Interpretation

Audience adaptation was commonly reported within this sample. Several respondents reported reducing the interpretative depth of literary monuments when guiding foreign visitors, omitting culturally specific references and concentrating on internationally legible narratives. Audience adaptation should not automatically be interpreted as a loss of heritage meaning. Zhu (2015) shows that institutional judgements about authenticity may differ from the meanings experienced by practitioners and participants and that adapted tourist performances may still generate meaningful forms of engagement. In the present study, however, only guides' reported practices were examined; the study cannot determine how visitors experience or evaluate these adaptations. The Literature and Language category is particularly subject to this compression: multiple respondents explicitly described skipping or minimising literary monuments for foreign audiences due to the absence of internationally recognisable reference points.

Some respondents reported providing less detailed interpretations of literary monuments for foreign visitors. Drawing on DeLyser's (2005) argument that tourism participates in the shaping of place through narrative and representation, guided tours can be read as one mechanism through which Zagreb is made legible to foreign visitors. In this sense, guided interpretation may

contribute to a simplified and selectively visible representation of Zagreb, one that privileges historical recognisability over symbolic complexity.

5.4. Implications for Cultural Tourism Policy

For tourism product management, the findings identify specific areas for consideration. Among participating guides, 18 (48.6%) selected Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures as important for Zagreb's urban identity, while eight (21.6%) selected this category among those they most frequently include in their interpretations. This was the largest positive descriptive difference between the two survey items. Thematic routes or interpretative materials focused on allegorical and symbolic monuments could therefore be considered by guide associations, cultural institutions, and destination managers. Separately, 26 respondents (70.3%) considered further training in monument symbolism and interpretation necessary, providing a direct basis for considering additional guide education. Respondents also mentioned time constraints and audience familiarity as practical considerations in their interpretative choices. Any proposed materials, routes, or training should take these considerations into account. The study did not test these measures or their effects on visitors or tourism outcomes. Although most respondents supported additional training, the survey question did not establish which specific competencies they wanted to develop. The following preliminary framework organises the practical suggestions at conceptual, micro and macro levels.

At a conceptual level, the findings support a preliminary practice framework built around three related components: monuments as symbolic infrastructure, tourist guides as interpretative mediators and cultural and tourism policy as strategic governance and tourism management. Monuments provide the material and symbolic resources, guides select and contextualise these resources in tourism narratives, while policy and destination-management institutions (e.g. tourist boards) can provide coordination, training, resources and communication guidelines. Their interaction may support layered heritage interpretation that acknowledges multiple and potentially contested meanings. However, the present study does not measure the independent or combined effects of these components.

At the micro level, possible tools include guide workshops on symbolism and contested heritage, interpretative materials, digital maps linking monuments to places and narratives or collaborative activities involving local residents, historians and cultural institutions. These tools could support guides' narrative and symbolic competence, spatial literacy and awareness of different perspectives that monumnets might express. This study did not test how well these tools work, so they are suggestions for future research.

At the macro level, tourism boards, cultural institutions, city authorities and guide associations could coordinate or propose thematic routes, shared multilingual materials and communication strategies that present Zagreb's

symbolic diversity. Such coordination could help connect guide-level practices with broader heritage management and destination development while avoiding the reduction of the city's heritage to a single narrative. Future research should assess the feasibility and effects of these proposals through observed tours, visitor studies, pilot training programmes and comparative research.

The study contributes an exploratory Croatian case by placing the thematic composition of central Zagreb's monument inventory alongside participating guides' self-reported inclusion priorities, views on the importance of monument categories for Zagreb's identity, and explanations of their interpretative choices. Selective visibility is used as a descriptive framework for interpreting differences in reported attention; it is not a validated explanatory model or a measure of actual tour coverage. The findings identify issues relevant to cultural tourism product development and guide training, while effects on visitors and economic outcomes remain untested.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study is based on an exploratory survey sample of 37 guides and focuses exclusively on licensed guides operating within central Zagreb during a single data collection period. The sample was small and non-probability, so the findings cannot be generalised to all tourist guides. Participation was voluntary, which may have led to self-selection bias: guides more interested in monumental heritage may have been more likely to take part. Future research should expand toward larger-sample surveys, comparative analyses of other post-socialist cities, visitor perception studies and examinations of digital and self-guided tourism mediation practices.

6. CONCLUSION

This exploratory study compared the thematic composition of 69 monuments in central Zagreb with the interpretative priorities reported by 37 licensed tourist guides. Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures formed the largest inventory category (18 of 69 monuments), but only eight respondents selected it among the categories they most frequently interpret. Historical Figures were selected most often, by 30 respondents. Eighteen respondents considered allegorical and symbolic monuments important for Zagreb's identity. The findings provide a descriptive account of the heritage present in the study area and the interpretative choices reported within this sample.

Three principal findings emerge. First, the inventory of central Zagreb contains a strong civic and cultural dimension, reflected in allegorical, literary, scientific and artistic monuments. Second, Historical Figures were selected most often among the categories respondents reported interpreting most frequently, whereas Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures were selected less often. Third, guides reported adapting monument interpretations to domestic and foreign audiences, suggesting that the narratives presented to different visitor groups may differ in scope. The study does not directly measure visitor

perceptions or actual tour behaviour. The small, non-probability sample does not allow the findings to be generalised to all licensed tourist guides in Zagreb.

Taken together, the findings point to a preliminary practice framework in which monuments provide symbolic resources, tourist guides mediate their interpretation and cultural and tourism institutions create the conditions for coordination and support. This framework connects the material structure of heritage with professional practice and destination management, without assuming that these components automatically produce shared outcomes. Since the present study did not observe tours, survey visitors, or test institutional interventions, the framework should be understood as a proposition for future research rather than as a validated model.

The study extends inventory-based research on Zagreb's monuments by showing that the categories most numerous in the study area are not necessarily those participating guides report prioritising. Bringing the inventory together with guides' accounts identifies questions for cultural tourism product development, guide education and destination coordination that an inventory alone cannot address. Guides' accounts describe selective storytelling and audience adaptation, but their effects on visitors' perceptions remain to be examined.

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APPENDIX

Methodological Notes on Categorisation in the Preparation of the Monument Inventory

The depicted persons and motifs of the monuments were classified through coding according to their dominant social role and contribution, using the following thematic categories:

Historical Figures – including politicians, state leaders, military commanders, nobility and other individuals who influenced political-historical processes.

Art – painters, sculptors, musicians and other members of the visual and musical arts.

Literature and Language – poets, writers, translators, linguists, publicists and journalists whose contributions relate to the written word and language culture.

Science and Innovations – scientists, researchers and innovators from the natural and social sciences.

Literary and Folkloric Characters – fictional or symbolic figures from literature and oral tradition.

Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures – abstract or symbolic forms that do not represent specific persons, but ideas, phenomena, values, or universal motifs (e.g., the Sun).

Social and Labour Figures – individuals publicly represented as representatives of the people, working class, or other social groups.

Religious Figures – saints, biblical persons and prominent figures from the history of religion.

Types of Monuments in the Catalogue

For the classification of the physical forms of monuments, the following categories were used:

Monument/Statue – a freestanding three-dimensional sculpture at life-size or larger, often placed on a pedestal.

Bust – depiction of the upper body of a person, usually up to the waist, placed on a base or column.

Memorial Plaque/Relief – a flat form with textual or relief depiction, most often attached to walls or displayed vertically.

Monument/Sculpture – an artistically shaped spatial installation of an abstract, symbolic, or allegorical nature.

Fountain – a water feature with artistic or symbolic sculptural design, serving both aesthetic and functional purposes.

This categorisation facilitates a structured understanding of the thematic and formal aspects of monumental heritage and serves as a foundation for further analysis of their distribution, interpretation and tourist potential.

Table 3 Inventory of public monuments in the central area of Zagreb

No.	Object/Depicted name or entity	Category	Type	Location
1	Pluto the Construction Dog	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Memorial Plaque/Relief	Mirko Bogović Street
2	The Grounded Sun	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monumental Sculpture	Mirko Bogović Street
3	Petrica Kerempuh	Literary and Folkloric Characters	Monument/Statue	Dolac Market
4	Kumica Barica	Social and Labour Figures	Monument/Statue	Dolac Market
5	Monument commemorating Croatia's accession to the EU (depicting a star and a cube)	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monumental Sculpture	European Square
6	Foliated Forms	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monumental Sculpture	Ljudevit Gaj Street
7	Memorial to Tomislav Gotovac	Art	Memorial Plaque/Relief	Ilica Street
8	Vlaho Paljetak	Art	Monument/Statue	Ilica Street
9	Julije Klović	Art	Monument/Statue	Jesuit Square
10	Borba (Fisherman with a Snake)	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Fountain	Jesuit Square
11	Dora Krupićeva	Literary and Folkloric Characters	Monument/Statue	Kamenita Street
12	Lion	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monument/Statue	Kamenita Street
13	Blessed Virgin Mary and Four Angels	Religious Figures	Monument/Statue	Kaptol Street
14	Great Torso	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monumental Sculpture	Kurelčeva Street
15	Andrija Kačić Miošić	Literature and Language	Monumental Sculpture	Mesnička Street
16	Andrija Mohorovičić	Science and Innovations	Monument/Statue	Grič Park
17	Boy	Social and Labour Figures	Monument/Statue	Grič Park
18	Stjepan Radić	Historical Figures	Monument/Statue	Petrinjska Street
19	Zdenka Baković	Historical Figures	Bust	Baković Sisters Passage
20	Rajka Baković	Historical Figures	Bust	Baković Sisters Passage
21	Saint George	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monument/Statue	Radićeva Street
22	Antun Gustav Matoš	Literature and Language	Monument/Statue	Strossmayer Promenade
23	Ante Starčević	Historical Figures	Monumental Sculpture	Ante Starčević Square
24	Josip Jelačić	Historical Figures	Monument/Statue	Ban Josip Jelačić Square
25	August Šenoa	Literature and Language	Bust	Josip Juraj Strossmayer Square
26	Dragutin Domjanić	Literature and Language	Bust	Josip Juraj Strossmayer Square
27	Ruđer Bošković	Science and Innovations	Bust	Josip Juraj Strossmayer Square
28	Execution of Hostages	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Memorial Plaque/Relief	Josip Juraj Strossmayer Square
29	Josip Juraj Strossmayer	Religious Figures	Monument/Statue	Josip Juraj Strossmayer Square
30	Andrija Medulić	Art	Monument/Statue	King Tomislav Square
31	King Tomislav	Historical Figures	Monument/Statue	King Tomislav Square
32	Marko Marulić	Literature and Language	Monument/Statue	Marko Marulić Square
33	Nikola Šubić Zrinski	Historical Figures	Bust	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square
34	Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski	Literature and Language	Bust	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square
35	Ivan Mažuranić	Literature and Language	Bust	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square

36	Julije Klović	Art	Bust	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square
37	Andrija Medulić	Art	Bust	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square
38	Krsto Frankopan	Historical Figures	Bust	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square
39	Nikola Jurišić	Historical Figures	Bust	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square
40	Mushroom Fountain	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Fountain	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square
41	Twins Fountain	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Fountain	Nikola Šubića Zrinski Square
42	Petar Preradović	Literature and Language	Monument/Statue	Petar Preradović Square
43	Boy	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Fountain	Petar Svačić Square
44	The Well Of Life	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monumental Sculpture	Republic of Croatia Square
45	Saint George Slaying the Dragon	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monument/Statue	Republic of Croatia Square
46	Đuro Deželić	Social and Labour Figures	Bust	Republic of Croatia Square
47	History of the Croats	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monumental Sculpture	Republic of Croatia Square
48	Herman Bolle	Art	Bust	Republic of Croatia Square
49	Izidor Kršnjavi	Art	Bust	Republic of Croatia Square
50	Matija Gubec	Historical Figures	Memorial Plaque/Relief	St. Mark Square
51	St. Augustine and Quirinus	Religious Figures	Monument/Statue	St. Mark Square
52	The Wounded Man	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monument/Statue	Andrija Hebrang Street
53	don Frane Bulić	Science and Innovations	Monumental Sculpture	Antun Mihanović Street
54	Marija Radić	Historical Figures	Memorial Plaque/Relief	Antuna Mihanović Street
55	Vjekoslav Klaić	Science and Innovations	Memorial Plaque/Relief	Ivana Gundulić Square
56	August Cesarec	Literature and Language	Bust	Ivan Taklčić Square
57	Marija Jurić Zagorka	Literature and Language	Monument/Statue	Ivan Tkalčić Square
58	Woman at the Window (depiction of a prostitute)	Social and Labour Figures	Monument/Statue	Ivan Tkalčić Square
59	Fran Žaver Kesterčanek	Science and Innovations	Bust	Ljudevit Farkaš Vukotinović Street
60	Jozip Kozarac	Literature and Language	Bust	Ljudevit Farkaš Vukotinović Street
61	Nikola Tesla	Science and Innovations	Monument/Statue	Petar Preradović Street
62	Nikola Tesla	Science and Innovations	Memorial Plaque/Relief	Saints Cyril and Methodius Street
63	Tin Ujević	Literature and Language	Monument/Statue	Varšavska Street
64	August Šenoa	Literature and Language	Monument/Statue	Vlaška Street
65	Monument to the Victims of the Holocaust and the Ustaša Regime	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monumental Sculpture	Knez Branimir Street
66	Eugen Kumičić	Literature and Language	Monument/Statue	Roosevelt's Square
67	The Reader	Literature and Language	Monument/Statue	Roosevelt's Square
68	Ljudevit Gaj	Literature and Language	Bust	Ljudevit Gaj Street
69	Red Sign	Allegorical Depictions and Symbolic Figures	Monumental Sculpture	Ljudevit Gaj Street

Source: Fieldwork conducted by the author based on Perkov et al. (2024)

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SELEKTIVNA VIDLJIVOST I SIMBOLIČKI URBANI IDENTITET: INTERPRETACIJA SPOMENIKA I TURISTIČKI NARATIVI U SREDIŠTU ZAGREBA

Sažetak

Ovaj eksplorativni rad deskriptivno uspoređuje spomeničku baštinu središnjeg Zagreba s interpretativnim prioritetima turističkih vodiča prema njihovim iskazima, kombinirajući inventarizaciju 69 spomenika s anketom provedenom među 37 licenciranih vodiča. Spomenici su klasificirani prema tematici i fizičkom obliku prikaza. Anketom su ispitani prijavljeni prioriteti uključivanja, percipirana važnost za identitet Zagreba te obrazloženja interpretativnih odabira. Alegorijski prikazi i simbolički likovi čine najveću kategoriju u inventaru (26,1 %). Među ispitanicima, 21,6 % odabralo je tu kategoriju među onima koje najčešće interpretiraju, dok ju je 48,6 % smatralo važnom za identitet Zagreba. Povijesne ličnosti najčešće su odabrana kategorija za prijavljeno uključivanje (81,1 %). Selektivna vidljivost pruža opisni okvir, bez testiranja statističke povezanosti inventara i anketnih podataka. Mali, neprobabilistički uzorak ograničava mogućnost generalizacije, a stvarni sadržaj tura i percepcije posjetitelja nisu mjereni. Nalazi upućuju na pitanja relevantna za razvoj kulturnoturističkih proizvoda, edukaciju vodiča i upravljanje destinacijom.

Ključne riječi: interpretacija baštine, turistički vodiči, turistički narativi, selektivna vidljivost, simbolički krajolici, turistički menadžment, Zagreb.

JEL klasifikacija: L83, Z10, Z32.