

## Archaeological Tourism: Ethical Principles and Site Management in Practice

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the interaction between ethical principles and site management approaches in the context of archaeological tourism, evaluating their practical application. The concept of archaeological tourism is considered from a multidimensional perspective within the framework of site management and ethical principles. Archaeological tourism is considered a holistic field, not limited to visiting archaeological remains, but also requiring planning in line with the protection of archaeological heritage, the participation of local people, and conservation principles. As well as protecting the physical integrity of archaeological sites, site management involves responsibilities such as ensuring a high-quality visitor experience, interacting with local communities, and maintaining cultural continuity. In this context, the ethical principles of consent, respect, and mutual accommodation provide a framework for planning, implementing, and delivering archaeological tourism. Furthermore, ethical risks such as the commercialisation of heritage, singular narratives in cultural representation and the exclusion of local communities require careful consideration in site management strategies. This conceptually based approach is complemented by a historical evolution of archaeological tourism from Antiquity to the present day. Thus, archaeological tourism is presented not merely as an activity that traces the remnants of the past, but also as a field that must be restructured in light of contemporary ethical and managerial principles. This study has revealed that archaeological tourism is not just an activity that exhibits the past; it is also a multi-layered field that needs to be redefined in line with ethical responsibilities and site management principles.

**Keywords:** Archaeological Tourism, Archaeological Site, Archaeological Tourism Ethics, Site Management

### 1.INTRODUCTION

In recent years, diversification trends in global tourism have led to the rise of special interest types of tourism based on cultural heritage. Archaeological tourism is not limited to visiting areas with historical remains; it is also a unique form of tourism involving multi-layered social processes such as producing knowledge about the past, constructing identity and ensuring

cultural continuity (Sonkaya, 2021; Richards, 2019; Srivastava, 2015). However, the growth of archaeological tourism brings ethical responsibilities and structural challenges related to site management. Increasing visitor numbers threaten the physical integrity of archaeological sites, while insufficient local community involvement in decision-making processes can lead to ethical issues such as cultural erosion and the instrumentalisation of heritage (Layton & Wallace, 2005; Díaz-Andreu, 2013; Funari, Zarankin & Stovel, 2013).

An effective site management approach should consider not only physical conservation, but also participatory governance principles, the visitor experience, and the transmission of cultural values in a preserved form, all simultaneously (Walker & Carr, 2013; Pacifico & Vogel, 2012). The holistic site management model is not limited to the physical management of sites; it also requires that the ethical and structural challenges encountered in the conservation of archaeological heritage should be addressed from a holistic perspective. The study will focus on structural issues such as the commercialisation of archaeological heritage, the disregard for scientific responsibilities, and the exclusion of indigenous communities (Wolverton, Figueroa & Swentzell, 2016). The study emphasizes the necessity of developing ethics-based governance models in the processes of both preserving archaeological sites and integrating them into tourism.

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the intricate and reciprocal relationships between ethics-based approaches and site management strategies in the context of archaeological tourism. It will also critically examine how these interactions are reflected in practical applications, ultimately leading to a clearer understanding of both theoretical and practical dimensions of the field.

## **2.CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Technological developments, urbanisation, increased levels of education, cultural diversity and the widespread use of digital media have a significant impact on individuals' lifestyles, value judgements and holiday preferences. In particular, easier access to internet-based information and the integration of social media into everyday life have transformed tourism behaviours, bringing a desire to engage with cultural and historical values to the forefront (Cobb & Nieminen, 2023). This has created a foundation for tourists to travel not only for entertainment and relaxation, but also to gain knowledge, seek meaning and engage in cultural activities (Richards, 2001; Chhabra, 2009). Archaeological tourism, which offers unique experiences and belongs to the category of special interest tourism based on cultural heritage, is becoming increasingly important (Afkhani, 2020). The online promotion of archaeological sites, virtual museum applications, 3D modelling and digital archaeology content shared on social media increases the interest and awareness levels of potential visitors, strengthening their motivation to visit in person (Cobb & Nieminen, 2023).

The historical development of archaeological tourism dates back to the periods of Ancient Greece and Rome. During these periods, travels undertaken by affluent classes for cultural and religious purposes are considered early forms of cultural tourism. With the Renaissance, the Grand Tour travels undertaken primarily by aristocratic classes in Europe for educational purposes systematized the interest in cultural heritage (Towner, 1985). From the late 19th century onwards, archaeology became institutionalized as a scientific discipline, excavation sites began to be documented and opened to the public through museums. Archaeological tourism is a holistic field that goes beyond being merely a touristic activity; it stands out with its functions of preserving the historical memory of societies, transmitting cultural heritage to future generations, and contributing to local development (Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

However, this process also entails various ethical responsibilities. Visitor density, uncontrolled dissemination of content on social media, commercialization pressures, and imbalanced relationships with local communities can threaten the physical and cultural integrity of archaeological sites (Díaz-Andreu, 2013). Therefore, in opening archaeological sites to tourism, not only economic benefits but also scientific responsibility, cultural respect, and ethical values must be considered. An ethical approach based on principles of information, participation, and conservation enables the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage to future generations (Blasco López et al., 2018; Csoba DeHass et al., 2022).

Within this framework, to comprehensively understand the multidimensional nature of archaeological tourism, first the concepts of 'archaeological tourism,' 'archaeological site,' and 'ethics in archaeological tourism' will be explained.

## 2.1 Archaeological Tourism

Archaeological tourism is a multidimensional type of tourism that encompasses visits to sites of archaeological and historical significance, as well as tourism activities conducted within this context. The emergence and development of archaeological tourism in a country largely depend on the nature of the archaeological remains that the country possesses (Díaz-Andreu, 2013). Srivastava (2015) defines archaeological tourism as a type of travel focused on tracing ancient civilizations and acquiring knowledge within a historical context. Sonkaya (2021) states that this type of tourism includes sites such as museums, archaeological sites, archaeoparks, and historical buildings. On the other hand, Rao and Saksena (2020) emphasize that the development of archaeological tourism on a global scale is uneven; while some sites are under excessive visitor pressure, many others are still excluded from tourism maps. Archaeological tourism is not only a means of cultural interaction but also a powerful economic tool that supports regional development. Srivastava (2015) states that this sector generates direct economic activity through various industries such as hotels, restaurants, handicraft shops, and guiding services, and that both local governments and communities earn revenue from entrance fees and service taxes.

These economic benefits also enhance local communities' awareness of the importance of preserving archaeological sites, making it easier for them to develop a sense of ownership over these areas (Pacífico & Vogel, 2012; Rao & Saksena, 2020). An important issue in this process is the difference in approach between archaeologists and tourism professionals. Hawas (1998) and Ouf (2001) state that archaeologists lack sufficient expertise in tourism management and visitor interaction, while tourism professionals have limited knowledge about the scientific value of cultural heritage.

Eliminating this disconnection is essential for the responsible management of archaeological resources. Katherine Slick (2002) emphasises that archaeologists should not view tourism as a threat, but rather as an area of potential collaboration, and calls for interdisciplinary dialogue. Archaeological tourism is a multifaceted form of tourism that emerges at the intersection of spatial mobility and cultural heritage, and it is continuously transforming throughout history. Visiting ancient settlements and historical remains for the purpose of experiencing the tangible traces of the past, establishing a connection with cultural continuity, and seeking intellectual satisfaction are some of the various motivations that have shaped this type of tourism. In this context, the historical development of archaeological tourism has involved various spatial and social transformations.

The evolution of archaeological tourism is examined below under four main periods:

**Ancient Ages: The Primitive Origins of Archaeological Consciousness:** The earliest traces of archaeological tourism are seen in the life-based spatial relationships that hunter-gatherer communities established with their environment. Although these movements were not directly touristic activities, the human tendency toward sacred sites and natural formations has laid the foundations for cultural explorations and visits to symbolic places (Acar, 2020). During the Neolithic period, collective visits, especially to sacred sites stimulated cultural interaction among different communities, and thus the early forms of archaeological tourism have been observed.

**The Ancient Age: Systematic Archaeological Travels:** During the periods of Greek and Roman civilisation, travel was integrated with religious rituals, cultural events and aesthetic experiences. Centres such as Delphi, Olympia, Knossos and Ephesus transformed into multifunctional tourist destinations for local and foreign visitors alike (Acar, 2020: 50; Romero, 2013). In Greek society, travel began to be regarded as an intellectual and philosophical pursuit, with historians such as Herodotus pioneering early forms of travel writing (Çoraklı, 2016; Bonnard, 2004). During the Roman period, tourism became more institutionalised, with components such as tours, accommodation, health centres and souvenir trading developing during the reign of Augustus (Lomine, 2005). Examples such as the Romans carving their names into Egyptian pyramids indicate the historical continuity of tourism and the desire to leave a mark (Casson, 1994).

**The Renaissance and the Grand Tour Period (Intellectual Interest in Antiquity):** With the Renaissance, the intellectual revival of interest in ancient civilizations increased attention to archaeological heritage. From the 17th century onward, young members of the European aristocracy embarked on cultural journeys known as the "Grand Tour" to experience classical civilizations firsthand (Albasan, 2019). During this process, collected archaeological artifacts were initially displayed in private collections and subsequently transformed into publicly accessible museums, which served as precursors to modern museology (Albasan, 2019).

**Institutionalization of Archaeological Tourism in the 19th and 20th Centuries:** The Renaissance marked an intellectual revival that sparked a renewed interest in ancient civilizations, leading to increased attention to archaeological heritage. Beginning in the 17th century, young members of the European aristocracy embarked on cultural journeys known as the "Grand Tour," where they sought to experience classical civilizations firsthand (Albasan, 2019). During these tours, artifacts collected from archaeological sites were initially displayed in private collections. Eventually, these collections evolved into public museums, which served as precursors to modern museology (Albasan, 2019). In the 20th century, the concept of urban archaeology gained prominence, with urban fabrics integrated with archaeological heritage to create tourist attractions. A global turning point in this process was the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, which provided an international framework for the protection of archaeological sites and the establishment of sustainable tourism principles.

The widespread adoption of international conservation principles and the intensified interaction of archaeological sites with tourism have necessitated that these sites be addressed not only from a historical perspective but also through a managerial approach.

## **2.2 Archaeological Site Management**

Archaeological sites are not merely the material remains of past civilizations; they are multilayered structures woven with social memory, identity, and local life (Díaz-Andreu, 2013; Pacifico & Vogel, 2012; Pinter, 2005). Therefore, site management requires a holistic framework that goes beyond physical conservation, encompassing visitor experience, ethical

responsibility, and financial sustainability. Archaeological sites are highly vulnerable due to natural factors, looting, and uncontrolled tourism activities. Physical destruction not only damages the remains but also irreversibly diminishes the potential knowledge that can be derived from these remains (Srivastava, 2015). In this regard, conservation programs should aim to simultaneously protect both the tangible heritage and the scientific data.

A significant portion of the damage to heritage sites stems from negligence, ignorance, and commercial greed (Crosby, 2002). Therefore, educating the local community about the value of archaeological materials should be an integral part of management processes. Strengthening local participation not only keeps social memory alive but also reduces conservation costs. Increasing tourist demand is transforming the presentation methods of archaeological sites. Traditionally expert-focused sites now have to accommodate the expectations of broader audiences (Walker & Carr, 2013). Within this framework, it is recommended that sites be positioned on a continuum of "education and entertainment" (Hughes et al., 2013).

Visitor loyalty is fed by a multifaceted perception system consisting of satisfaction, trust, emotional attachment, and positive surprises (Chen & Phou, 2013; Keränen & Jalkala, 2014; Prayag et al., 2013). The transmission of knowledge that strengthens experiential values, relationship investment, and quality service affects repeat visits positively (Blasco López et al., 2020; Zeithaml, 1988).

The "emotional uniqueness" of archaeological sites (Castellanos-Verdugo, Oviedo-García & Martín-Ruiz, 2011) meets visitors' need to form connections as much as their cognitive learning (Martín-Ruiz et al., 2010; Sánchez et al., 2006). This need can be supported through storytelling and multi-sensory presentation techniques. The static nature of archaeological narratives offers visitors only "old and beautiful" objects in the absence of interpretation; however, people desire to hear stories, be entertained, and contribute (Lazrus, 2006; Slick, 2002).

Educational attractions risk being perceived as "static" while preserving their authenticity (Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003; Duke, 2007). In contrast, simulation-based entertaining approaches provide visitors with stories and foster personal connections (Beeho & Prentice, 1997). Management strategies should balance between these two poles (Beeho & Prentice, 1997). Intense interest has given rise to a new audience that is distant from archaeology but highly eager for experience. Offering multiple types of sites to these tourists, who approach authenticity with different sensitivities, reduces potential dissatisfaction (Cohen, 1988; Mazzola, 2015). Diversified experiences should be designed in a way that does not conflict with heritage preservation.

Site management involves ethical responsibilities beyond strategic and operational processes. Actions taken without sensitivity to local identity and memory lead to cultural erosion (Díaz-Andreu, 2013). The economic benefits of entertainment-focused presentations must be balanced with conservation obligations (Slick, 2002). Not compromising the meaning of heritage while meeting visitor needs is a fundamental principle of ethical management (Beeho & Prentice, 1997). Sites that cannot analyze the identity of their visitor base and do not consider their experiential needs fail to sustain their existence in the competitive heritage tourism environment (Beeho & Prentice, 1997). Site management is more dependent than ever on the support of broad audiences and public funding (Malcolm-Davies, 2004). Limited public interest in archaeology jeopardizes financial sustainability (Holtorf, 2007; Young, 2006). Therefore, communication and information programs should be conducted within an ethical framework that strengthens social support.

From a site management perspective, physical conservation requires a multidimensional strategy that includes experience design, adherence to ethical principles, alignment with visitor profiles, and public engagement. Archaeological sites are positioned not only as contributors to the preservation of cultural heritage but also as centers that attract stable visitor interest over time.

### 2.3 Archaeology and Ethics

Over the past half-century, archaeological heritage has become the focus not only of academic circles but also of the public, the tourism sector, and government policies. This expansion has necessitated the emergence of archaeological ethics, a new interdisciplinary field. The concept of ethics derives from the Ancient Greek word *ethos* ("custom") and was first systematically examined by Aristotle; today, it is defined as a normative field of thought aiming to justify the distinction between "good" and "bad" (Singer, 2011).

Within the scope of this study, archaeological ethics is addressed as a normative and principled framework that considers the rights of local communities, the integrity of cultural values, and scientific responsibilities in the processes of preservation, management, and presentation of archaeological heritage. Ethical debates in archaeology emerged particularly with increasing concerns over the inadequacies in the protection of site areas, laying the groundwork for the emergence of the concept of cultural heritage management (Díaz-Andreu, 2013). However, the concepts of ethics and archaeological tourism have, with some exceptions, remained two distinct fields rarely brought together in the academic world (Meskell, 2005).

Archaeological ethics focuses on three fundamental principles based on the cultural heritage claims of indigenous and local communities: consent, respect, and reciprocity (Wolverton, Figueroa & Swentzell, 2016). The principle of consent emphasizes that no archaeological or tourism activity should commence without informed approval. Respect requires that the cultural values, beliefs, and rituals of indigenous peoples are not harmed. The principle of reciprocity necessitates collaboration based on equal say among archaeologists, tourism operators, and local communities.

This tripartite framework is also reflected in the ethical codes of organizations such as the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA), the Society for American Archaeology (SAA), and the World Archaeological Congress (WAC).

However, the commercialization of the past is one of the most criticized ethical aspects of archaeological tourism. Tour operators transforming cultural heritage into a "packaged" product superficializes the symbolic meaning of heritage and weakens historical ties with local communities (Layton & Wallace, 2005; Walker & Carr, 2013). Such approaches also lead to the disrespectful use of sites considered sacred and physical damage to archaeological remains due to unconscious tourist behaviors (Walker & Carr, 2013).

Government policies deepen ethical dilemmas by instrumentalizing archaeological heritage for ideological purposes. The use of archaeological heritage in national identity construction often results in the exclusion of indigenous and local communities; universal value discourses lead to the marginalization of local demands (Díaz-Andreu, 2013). Such instrumentalizations not only superficialize the meaning of heritage but also weaken the sense of belonging among communities. Funari, Zarankin, and Stovel (2013) state that archaeological tourism carries both opportunities and threats, compelling archaeologists to confront ethical responsibilities.

The exclusion of indigenous communities is one of the most common ethical violations in archaeological tourism. The historical memory of these communities reveals that archaeological sites possess not only scientific but also social and cultural contexts. Therefore,

an ethical approach should encompass not only physical conservation but also ensuring local participation, supporting cultural education, and preserving collective memory (Pacífico & Vogel, 2012).

In order to address ethical issues, archaeologists need to develop not only technical expertise but also ethical sensitivity. In this context, professional training programs should place greater emphasis on ethics and cultural heritage management. More equitable and participatory relationships should be established with local communities, ensuring their active involvement in the management and presentation of archaeological sites. This approach will contribute significantly not only to the sustainable preservation of heritage but also to the establishment of social justice (Díaz-Andreu, 2013).

### **3.CONCLUSION**

Archaeological tourism is a multidimensional field that involves not only the physical experience of historical heritage through visits but also the responsibility of preserving this heritage, sharing it with society in accordance with ethical principles, and transferring it to future generations. In this context, the continuous management of archaeological sites is of critical importance for the long-term success of archaeological tourism. Effective site management requires not only physical conservation measures but also enhancing the quality of visitor experience, strengthening ethically based cooperation with local communities, and adopting a holistic approach that reflects the universal values of cultural heritage.

The integration of digital technologies into archaeological heritage management expands both physical and virtual access to sites while supporting ethical and preservation-oriented approaches. Innovative methods such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and storytelling techniques enrich archaeological narratives, providing meaningful experiences for both physical and digital visitors, while also reducing physical pressure on remains and contributing to conservation efforts. However, ethical principles such as the accuracy of cultural representation and the consent of local communities should form the foundation of management processes in the use of these technologies.

The growth of archaeological tourism brings with it ethical and managerial challenges. The commercialization of heritage, the exclusion of local communities from decision-making processes, and one-sided narratives in cultural representation pose serious threats both ethically and in terms of sustainability. Therefore, policies and site management practices related to archaeological tourism should be grounded in an ethical framework based on the principles of consent, respect, inclusivity, and mutual benefit. This framework should strengthen the ties of local people to cultural heritage while ensuring the equitable distribution of the socio-economic benefits of tourism.

In conclusion, the sustainability of archaeological tourism depends on site management strategies developed through an interdisciplinary approach, the ethical use of technological innovations, and governance models grounded in a strong ethical foundation. A collaborative governance model established among archaeologists, site managers, local communities, and tourism stakeholders will ensure the preservation of archaeological heritage and its continuation as a public value. Archaeological tourism should be defined not merely as an activity tracing the remnants of the past but as a dynamic and responsibility-laden field of study that must be reshaped in light of ethical principles and effective site management.

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