THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF QUEBEC'S HERITAGE SITES IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

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KEY WORDS	ABSTRACT
Cultural Heritage *UNESCO* *Cultural Tourism* *Instagram* *Covid-19* *Historic District of Old Quebec* *Tourist attractiveness*	*UNESCO World Heritage site designation is an opportunity to achieve international status. Studies have demonstrated that many of these sites are major attractions to international visitors and first-time visitors. While Covid-19 has limited international mobility during 2020, this study aims to understand how those responsible for tourism and World Heritage sites have communicated the heritage of the Historic District of Old Quebec (Canada) to local and national visitors. To measure tourist attractiveness, the study analyzed publications posted on Instagram during the summer of 2020. Strategies for diffusion revealed an approach to enhance natural sites more than the cultural heritage.*

1. Introduction

Mobility and the possibility of visiting regions other than one's own are important for the construction of identity. Indeed, traveling and sightseeing gives meaning and order to the world we inhabit (Minca & Oakes 2006).

In recent years, the region of Quebec has mainly welcomed national visitors (65%), Americans (14%) and the French (12%) according to the *Office du tourisme de Québec* (OTQ, 2017b). Among Quebec visitors, the vast majority (86%) had already visited the Quebec region, while the majority of tourists from outside Quebec (73%) were on their first visit (OTQ, 2017c). The study conducted by the OTQ also finds that the Historic District of Old Quebec and its fortifications are the attraction that arouses the most interest among tourists from Quebec (64%), but even more among tourists from outside Quebec. (82%) (OTQ, 2017c). It also showed that local visitors (48%) appreciate Old Quebec for its heritage and history (OTQ, 2017b). Most visitors to Old Quebec were also familiar with the term UNESCO World Heritage at the time of the visit (65%), and of these, more than two-thirds (68%) knew that the borough history of Old Quebec is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Foreign tourists know better than local visitors that Old Quebec has been designated a World Heritage Site (Lepage, 2019).

The international scenario of the last decades has transformed the high points of tourist places into global metropolises and urban jungles (Minca & Oakes, 2006). Tourist towns have seen the development of isolated districts, based on a single function, tourism. These neighborhoods therefore offer visitors an autonomous universe of "entertainment, fantasy authenticity and security, a universe disconnected from that of the resident populations" (Lapointe, 2020, p. 634).

In this very particular context of Covid-19, where international attendance has suddenly become non-existent, it is important to think about how residents suddenly become the center of tourist attention, and how heritage is represented to attract this clientele.

The purpose of the research is thus to determine how the World Heritage Site of the Historic District of Old Quebec was promoted on Instagram social networks during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Specifically, the research aims to identify:

- The types of Heritage disseminated by the different organizations involved in the promotion of Old Quebec, as well as their level of engagement.
- The particular elements of Old Quebec, UNESCO World Heritage Sites that were diffused.
- The relationship between Heritage and residents, as illustrated through interactions in social media.

The tourist attractiveness of the Heritage of the Historic District of Quebec for residents was studied following a mixed methodology (quantitative and qualitative) generated from the analysis of the visual and textual content of the publications posted on Instagram.

2. Theoretical and methodological framework

2.1. Tourism and Heritage in Quebec

The Historic District of Old Quebec, a site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985, is an attractive tourist destination in terms of touristic and cultural resources (Lee, 2012; OTQ, 2017a; OTQ, 2017b). However, its attractiveness and its heritage did not begin with its inscription on this List (St-Pierre, 2018). These processes, already in place for more than a century, have made it possible to safeguard and protect the architectural heritage, and thus to obtain the international designation. The recognized historic district covers an area of one square kilometer, and its criteria for inscription relate to its fortifications and the role Quebec

played in the colonization of the Americas (UNESCO, 2020).

In recent years, the designation has been widely used as a point of distinction in the promotion of tourist destinations (Marcotte & Bourdeau, 2012). In the case of Quebec, the designation also represents a guarantee of the authenticity and beauty of the place (Lepage, 2019). The attraction of this heritage can then serve as a link between tourists and the cultural community (Leduc, Bourdeau & Marcotte, 2017; Boivin & Tanguay, 2019).

2.1.1. Instagram and heritage

Western society today is marked by virtuality. Thanks to social networks, anyone can follow, share, comment and discuss different types of content regardless of geographic distances. The actions deployed through these networks also transform daily social interactions (Jansson, 2018), while social expectations are altered by pressure dependent on the gaze of others, narcissism or the cult of popularity. These cultural practices provide, in the words of Bourdieu (2018), a form of symbolic capital serving both as a model and as an object of manipulation.

Some studies also indicate that social networks are gaining in importance in the search for tourist information online (Iñesta Fernández & Xisto García, 2020; Segarra-Saavedra & Hidalgo-Marí, 2020), even surpassing traditional tourist offices (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Xiang et al., 2015). In Quebec, for example, nearly three in four tourists say they have consulted the Internet and social networks when planning their trips (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019).

The popularity and influence of this trend have an impact on the manner of distributing images on social networks and the construction of the identity of users and destinations. The ever-increasing circulation of tourist's images on these networks tends to create and communicate an aesthetic cultural identity. Although this circulation is quantitatively important, the images diffused appear less and less

differentiated. Social media thus contributes to the way in which sites are perceived, appropriated and constructed to respond to this image (Jansson, 2018). In this context of hyper-connection, the omnipresence of images, to the point of iconic pollution (Fontcuberta, 2011), helps to construct and recreate reality thanks to the social imaginary significations (SIS) mentioned by Castoriadis (2007). The images are published, (re)produced on Instagram and ordered according to the preferences of each user. Their use, in all its forms, is the basis of socialization on Instagram. In addition, hashtag keyword research helps to strengthen the tone of posts and increase their visibility (Lobillo Mora & Aja Gil, 2020). Iñesta Fernánez & Xisto García (2020) suggest that these hashtags "promote the virality of content across the network so that users interested in these tags can know the publications and content that are generated around it" (p .163).

2.1.2. The Covid-19 era. Tourism and heritage in Quebec

Tourism and pandemia are intimately linked. Measures to curb the latter include reducing visitor traffic, directly impacting the former (Felix, García & Vera, 2020). Covid-19, by forcing the closure of borders to avoid massive spread, has upset the entire world economy and dragged the tourism sector into an unprecedented crisis (Trigo, 2020). International tourist flows have almost ceased, while national flows have changed course. The majority of large cities, previously highly prized, have been abandoned in favor of rural regions (Marcotte, Khomsi, Falardeau, Roult & Lapointe, 2020).

The crisis was thus even stronger for touristically landlocked urban areas that are highly dependent on these international visitors, such as Old Quebec (Lapointe, 2020). Traders had to deal with a wave of closures and demanded from institutions "that the Historic District reinvents itself and move away from the 'monoculture' of tourism" (Béland, 2020). Before the pandemic, this monoculture had led to the disappearance of local businesses and services, while hotels, galleries, souvenir shops, and

tourist restaurants multiplied (Bourque, 2020). The situation changed in early 2020 with the coronavirus. Following the drastic drop in the number of tourists, Quebec City tourism officials invested $ 750,000 in an advertising campaign to bring Quebec tourists back to Old Quebec. This was ultimately a lost cause, as the campaign "did not achieve the expected results" (Martin, 2020).

As of this writing, the pandemic continues and visitor mobility remains reduced, tourism is transforming. The same businesses that previously specialized in serving foreign visitors have turned to residents in an attempt to meet their needs. However, when the entire economic ecosystem of a region depends on tourism, the consequences of its abrupt end are undoubtedly major.

2.1. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand how a destination whose tourism is mainly based on its heritage, in this case "global", reorganizes its promotion of tourism in the absence of international tourism. The approach is based on a mixed methodology analyzing posts on the social network Instagram to understand how tourism and heritage actors use this application to promote the heritage of Quebec City. This methodological approach made it possible to map the level of interaction and engagement of the institutions responsible for heritage communication, which will be of great help in designing short-term local tourism action strategies.

Data collection was carried out using two monitoring tools. First, *FanPage Karma* made it possible to carry out a detailed analysis of the mentions of heritage sites in Quebec as well as performance indicators (engagement, interactions, publications and reactions) of the Instagram profiles of four players in the sector of tourism. Second, *SocialBlade* made it possible to measure and compare analytically how the profile interactions were linked to their followers (an essential element in terms of engagement) and to the dissemination of social representations (Castoriadis, 2004). To quantify the touristic promotion and diffusion of heritage

during the coronavirus pandemic, the study focused on the publication of photographic images on Instagram between the months of June and September 2020. The selection of the sample was limited by the tools' inability to retrieve old messages, which in turn limited the scope of the study to be synchronous in nature. Canadian international borders were closed during this period, but from the end of June, Canadians could move within the national territory. Despite the absence of international tourism, a "tourist season" took place.

The selection of the tourism and heritage players studied is based on their responsibility for heritage in Canada (Table 1).

The Parks Canada Agency (PC) is the Canadian representative for matters related to the World Heritage Convention. In particular, it is responsible for the management, presentation and marketing of certain World Heritage Sites, including the Historic District of Old Quebec. *Tourisme Québec*, under provincial jurisdiction, has the mission of promoting the entire territory of the province of Quebec nationally and internationally. *L'Office de tourisme de Québec* is both a regional tourist association (ATR) and a service of the City of Quebec (OTQ, 2020). The OTQ is responsible for promoting the region of Quebec (not to be confused with the province of Quebec). Finally, the City of Quebec was selected. While its mission is not to directly promote the city's heritage to visitors, it is responsible for the animation and enhancement of several heritage sites in Old Quebec. The analysis of this account is also interesting in that it is aimed primarily at residents of the city.

Table 1. Research sample

User name	Account IG	Institution	Followers
Parcs Canada	@parcs.canada	Parks Canada official account (French version) (National scope)	42 K
Bonjour Québec	@tourismequebec	Tourisme Québec official account (Provincial scope)	164 K
Québec Cité, Québec	@Quebeccite	Account of the Office du tourisme de Québec (OTQ) (Regional scope)	142 K
Ville de Québec	@villequebec	Quebec City account (Municipal scope)	37 K

Source: Personal elaboration under *the FanPage Karma* database

Regarding the collection and processing of data, the engagement and level of interaction of the four profiles were assessed taking into account the variables described in Table 2. *FanPage Karma*, which has proven itself in the context of several investigations (Gonzalez-Carrion & Aguaded, 2020; Suing, Salazar & Ortiz, 2018; Sánchez Jiménez, Coreeia, de Matos, 2018), and served as a starting point to evaluate the selected Instagram profiles. *SocialBlade* was used to assess the general engagement of accounts by analyzing the five variables detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Description of variables

Variable	*FanPage Karma*
Engagement	Percentage of engagement achieved for each profile
Followers	Total number of registered followers for each profile
Post interactions	Degree of user participation according to published content
Weekly evolution	Total percentage of the weekly evolution of each profile compared to the publication activity
Performance index	Percentage measuring the effectiveness of the profile and posts
Nº. of "I like"	Total number of "likes" reached for each profile
Nº publications	Number of daily messages published for each profile
Publications day	Average daily posts of each profile
Nº comments	Total number of comments posted for each profile
Total Nº reactions	Total number of reactions, comments and shares for each profile
Variable	***SocialBlade***
Nº subscribers	Global positioning of the profile according to the number of subscribers
Nº following profiles	Global positioning of the profile according to the number of accounts that follow it
Engagement	Global positioning of the profile according to the interaction
Media Rank	Global positioning of the profile according to the influence of the profile
SocialBlade profile rating	Success of each profile (measures interaction and influence) highest A ++ and lowest D)

Source: Personal elaboration under *FanPage Karma* and *SocialBlade* database

The thematic analysis of each publication was carried out accounting for three main categories: 1) geography (the location of the photo), 2) content (theme and image) and 3) interactions (see Table 3). A total of 320 publications published during the period from June to September 2020 were analyzed.

Table 3. Content categories of publications

Variable	Code	Categories
Content (Heritage representation)	PAC-1	Publications focusing on cultural heritage
	PAN-1	Publications focused on natural heritage
	PAA-1	Publications focused on another theme, excluding heritage
Content (Photographic representation)	PHC-2	Publications containing images related to cultural heritage
	PHN-2	Publications containing images related to natural heritage
	PHA-2	Publications containing images related to other themes outside heritage
Geography (Geographic distribution)	PQF-3	Publications that explicitly show the fortifications of Old Quebec
	PQQ-3	Publications that explicitly show the Petit-Champlain district
	PQB-3	Publications that explicitly show Notre-Dame-de-Québec Basilica-Cathedral.
	PQC-3	Publications which explicitly show the Château Frontenac and / or the Dufferin terrace
	PQP-3	Publications that explicitly show the Place des Canotiers (access to the river)
	PQA -3	Publications relating to other sites in Quebec City
	PQR-3	Publications relating to other sites in the province of Quebec
	PQH-3	Publications relating to sites outside the province of Quebec
Interactions around publications	PNJ-4	Number of "Likes" per post
	PNC-4	Total number of comments per post
	PNI-4	Interaction level of each post

Source: Personal elaboration

3. Results

3.1. Engagement and interactions of the four profiles studied

Four findings emerge after compiling the data. First, the PC profile is positioned as having the most engagement (1.75%) and eliciting the most interactions during its publications (2.05%) (See Table 4). *BonjourQuébec* and *QuébecCité* profiles, with weaker engagement, have the highest positions, particularly in terms of the number of followers with three times more than PC (40K). The profiles of *BonjourQuébec* and *QuébecCité* are thus better situated on Instagram in relation to the relationship between followers-following.

We also find that *BonjourQuébec* and *QuébecCité* have a greater number of followers for smaller territories (respectively the province of Quebec, and the region of Quebec City), than that of PC. This difference is explained by the fact that we have chosen the French-speaking site of PC. PC has a second profile dedicated to publications in English (@parks.canada) with 441K subscribers, almost 3 times more than the two Quebec sites. Compared to the French-language PC site, the Quebec profiles include the most referenced indicators in terms of engagement. However, it should be noted that the level of interaction inside PC is higher, even if the profile is followed by fewer users.

Regarding the weekly and total evolution of the four accounts, the indicators do not show any information for the PC profile during the period studied, but place *BonjourQuébec* in the front line, with a monthly increase of 0.63% compared to other profiles.

Finally, we note that the profile of the City of Quebec does not present good indicators related to engagement. The data collected show very weak indicators compared to the other accounts mentioned. As this is an interlocutor whose public is more targeted (city residents, as opposed to all the potential tourist clientele), it is not surprising that the figures obtained place it as the profile with the least engagement.

Table 4. Engagement and interaction of three profiles on Instagram

	PC	BQ	QC	VQ
Engagement	1.75%	1.34%	1.03%	0.22%
Followers	40 K	160K	142K	37 K
Post interactions	2.05%	1.63%	1.57%	1.02%
Relation follower following	440.4	2683.9	98.3	93.8%
Weekly evolution	-	0.63%	0.5%	0.32%
Total evolution in%	-	11.57%	9.03%	5.64%
Performance index	-	15%	11.0%	4.0%
Nº of "I like"	85K	245K	167K	9.4K
Nº of publications	114	100	80	26
Publications / day	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.2
Nº. of comments	700	2.9K	2.4K	144
Total Nº of reactions	86K	248K	169K	9.5K

Source: *FanPage Karma*- Red: Best ranking / Green: Second position / Grey: Third position
Pc: Parcs Canada / BQ: *BonjourQuébec* / QC : *QuébecCité* / VQ : Ville de Québec.

An analysis of the interactions shows that *BonjourQuébec* is positioned as the profile with the most interactions. It has three-fold the number of likes compared to PC and generates both the highest number of comments for each post (2.9K) as well as total reactions (likes and comments), receiving 248K reactions compared to 199K at *QuébecCité* and 86K at PC (see Table 4).

It should also be noted that most publications were created during the days of the week, Friday being the most active day in terms of content creation.

The profile for *BonjourQuébec* obtains an almost perfect average, positioning it as the most interactive and engaging Instagram account with its followers. PC for its part, with more publications, is positioned as the most engaging. As for *QuebecCité*, there is a trend in favor of an

increase in the level of interactions. Finally, Quebec City has the lowest ratings of engagement and interaction. However, its level of development indicates an increasing trend in daily and weekly communication.

3.2. Positioning in the world ranking

Thanks to the categorial analysis provided by *SocialBlade* (Table 2), it is possible to compare the universal engagement (Engagement Rank) of the four Instagram accounts linked to cultural tourism in Quebec. Considering that the profiles with the most subscribers in the world are those of celebrities - sports, cultural or brands - (SocialBlade, 2020a), the profile best placed in the world rankings, although far from the top of the rankings, is that of *BonjourQuébec* in place 204.065 (See Table 5).

Table 5: Overall ranking of profiles on Instagram.

	Profile Instagram			
	PC	**BQ**	**QC**	**VQ**
Rank N. followers	856.338	204.065	232.904	955.447
Rank N. following	11 million	8.1 million	3.3 million	7.8 million
Rank Engagement	6.6 million	6.9 million	6.2 million	8.4 million
Media Rank	1.1 million	1.2 million	905 mil	2.2 million
Rank Profile Score	B-	B	B	B-

Source: *SocialBlade*
Red: Best ranking / Green: Second position / Grey: Third position
* *SocialBlade* rating A +, A, A-, B +, B, B-, C +, C, C-

Compared to the positioning of the numbers of follow-ups (Following Rank), the world ranking places the profiles in a widely variable oscillating zone (between 3.3 million for Quebec City and 11million for PC), considerably far from the first positions of the rank. The four accounts manage to interact in cyberspace by diffusing and promoting Quebec tourist destinations to a large number of followers. However, PC obtains a relative notoriety according to the criteria of engagement and media rank, despite the fact that the other indicators place it below average.

SocialBlade Rank, which measures the influence of a channel based on various measures, including the average number of views and the number of widgets (graphical components) from other listed channels (SocialBlade, 2020b) made it possible to understand the positioning of the four profiles. Ultimately it is *QuébecCité* that ranks first[1] in terms of global engagement in four of the five variables announced.

As for the rating for profiles *Tourisme Québec* and the OTQ, we can say that they are well positioned because their "B" rating approaches that of an "A+" (the most influential profiles). In this way, they occupy a more advantageous position in terms of visibility on Instagram. The "B-" averages obtained by PC and the City of Quebec have a good level of interaction, organic growth and views; however, they can then improve their distribution strategies in order to better position themselves on Instagram
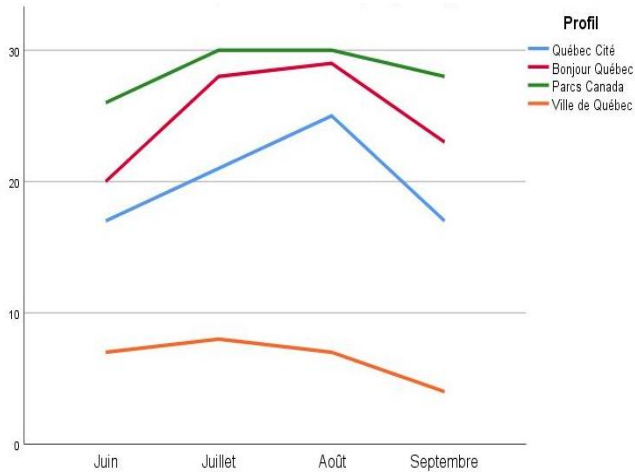
3.3. The type of heritage posted on Instagram

An analysis of the publications posted by the four accounts (n = 320) shows that the PC account is the most productive in terms of content delivery (see Figure 1). There is also a gradual increase in the number of publications during the months of June, July and August, which corresponds to the relaxation of travel restrictions.

The decrease in the number of publications in September corresponds to the end of the holiday period. Finally, the low participation in terms of heritage dissemination by the City of Quebec's profile can be explained by the fact that the OTQ is responsible for the promotions of tourism on behalf of the city.

Figure 1: Number of publications by the profiles studied

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[1] It's important to note that the level of engagement measured by *SocialBlade* is based on the last 20 photos published. This index is therefore very unstable over time. The data published here is as of November 2, 2020.

Source: Personal elaboration

Figure 2: Geographical distribution of publications according to the profiles studied

Source: Personal elaboration

As for the representations of heritage transmitted by the four accounts, it appears that almost half of the publications (46%) deal with subjects unrelated to heritage. The theme of nature is more present than that of cultural heritage (with respectively 33% and 21% of publications).

Figure 2 illustrates the activity of each profile according to the locations mentioned. We observe that:

-The profile of PC, which targets the whole of Canada, refers almost exclusively to heritage located outside of both the region and the city of Quebec, with the exception of a site located in Quebec City (*Lieu historique national Cartier-Brébeuf,* outside the historic district), and a single post relating to the National Historic Site of *Grosse-Île-et-le-Mémorial-des-Irlandais*, located 70 km from the city.

-The accounts of *BonjourQuébec* and *QuébecCité*, also in accordance with their mission, publish information on the province, the city and Old Quebec.

-The *BonjourQuébec* account publishes information related to the most emblematic tourist sites in the historic district.

- *QuébecCité* promotes the city of Quebec and its "green belt" (natural attractions, outside the city). Among the cultural heritage sites, the most highlighted sites are the *Château Frontenac*, the *Petit-Champlain* district, the Basilica-Cathedral, and the fortifications.

When considering the total number of posts for each of the different heritage sites across the four accounts, the *Château Frontenac* appears at the top of the places represented on Instagram (51%), followed by the *Petit-Champlain* and *the Basilique-Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-Québec* (see Figure 3). It is important to note that most mentions of Quebec heritage sites come from the profile of *QuebecCity*, and to a lesser extent, *BonjourQuebec*.

Figure 3: Relative number of posts regarding different heritage sites on Instagram for the four profiles
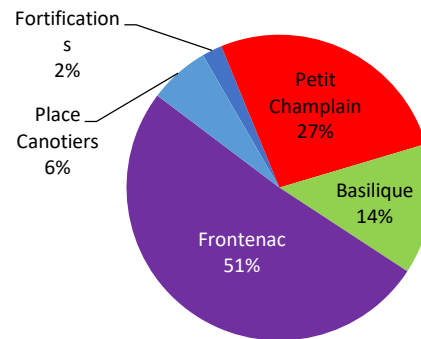
Source: Personal elaboration

3.3.1 The most represented concepts and hashtags on Instagram

Instagram's visual universe is structured like that of other social networks. Each profile can follow different accounts and, at the same time, be followed by other users. Likes that can be

granted, and comments on visual or audiovisual material, are also part of the world of visual connectivity at Instagram.

One of the most popular hashtags has been the PC profile's own name (#parcscanada). Its most active records are those associated with natural and outdoor activities (Figure 4). On this Instagram account, nature is therefore the most represented.

The notion of heritage itself has been largely forgotten; out of the 320 publications analyzed, only 10 of them explicitly mentioned the word heritage and 15 others incorporate the word UNESCO to describe the particularities of tourist sites.

Figure 4: Top hashtags associated with Instagram posts

Top Hashtags

#explorecanada	195
#canada	192
#bonjourquebec	167
#parcscanada	132
#nature	119
#quebec	113
#voyage	110
#photographie	109
#paysage	109
#sauvage	109
#jouerdehors	109

Source: *FanPage Karma*

3.4. The use of images. The case of Parks Canada

The PC profile deserves further analysis. We note that the information disseminated mainly deals with territories located outside the province of Quebec (Graph 2), and that it mainly concerns natural sites and declared heritage sites in Canada (Graph 4). This trend is not surprising, considering that this account was ranked third on Instagram among the top Canadian influencers on the subject of "Nature and Landscapes" (HypeAuditor, 2020). This type of profile strategically builds its own brand and generates content of interest to its audience on

social networks (González Oñete & Martinez Sánchez, 2020). Of the 90 PC publications, only one referred to Quebec City, yet for a site located outside the historic district recognized by UNESCO. The information therefore shows that PC did not contribute to the circulation of images regarding the world heritage of Old Quebec during the Covid-19 period.

Although the PC Agency is responsible for the promotion of the historic district, considering the lack of relevance in its posts, PC's Instagram profile was not retained for further analysis.

3.5. Use of images associated with Quebec

Photographic material (80.6%) makes up the majority of the analyzed corpus, followed by carousel-type publications (11.9%) where visual material is assembled to generate more engaging and dynamic publications. Finally, the corpus consisted of 7.5% video material.

In Figure 5, we note that the *BonjourQuébec* account published a majority of photos on themes other than heritage (PHA: 49%); those specifically dealing with cultural heritage represent one third (PHC: 34%). The *QuébecCité* account includes a majority of photographs with a cultural theme (55%), while natural sites are poorly represented (11%). The Quebec City account does not display any photographs of heritage sites.

Figure 5: Posts regarding heritage sites represented on Instagram profiles
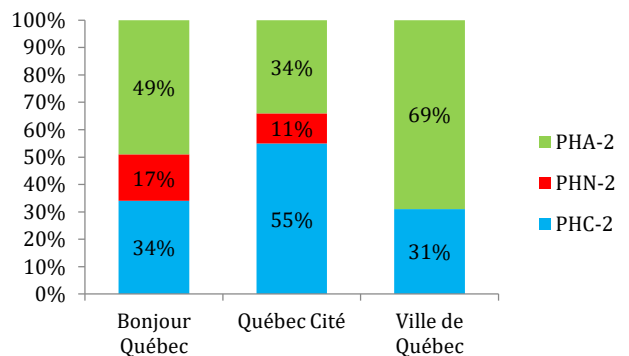
Source: Personal elaboration

The profile of the Quebec Tourism Office is therefore the only one to dominate the cultural scene with a large majority of its images referring to heritage.

3.5.1. The use of images associated with the historic district

The initial hypothesis that heritage sites are well-represented has not been confirmed, the majority of the sites represented in the images being "other" sites. Despite this low level of representation, the most represented sites are those linked to the *Château Frontenac*, the *Petit-Champlain* district, the *Notre-Dame-de-Québec Basilica-Cathedra*l, the *Place des Canotiers*, the Fortifications, and others locations in Old Quebec.

Figures 6 and 7, illustrating the visual representation, partly confirm the textual representation (sites mentioned). The majority of the sites presented are different from those initially identified. Among the sites identified, the *Château Frontenac* and the *Petit-Champlain* district are highlighted, both in textual and visual publications. If the Basilica-Cathedral appears to be the third most textually cited site, the fortifications are the third most visually illustrated site.

It is also emphasized that sites in the city of Quebec without association with UNESCO heritage ("Other city" category) were the most represented in both cases.

Figure 6: Sites of Old Quebec represented on Bonjour Quebec
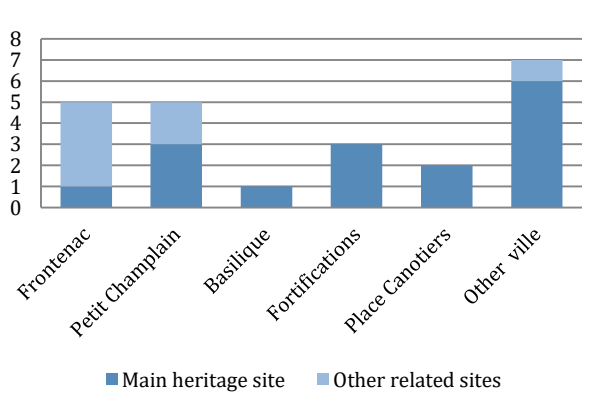
Source: Personal elaboration

It should also be noted that the interactive publications (carousel and videos) project images of different tourist and heritage places. While *BonjourQuébec* gives greater visibility to the fortifications and to the *Petit-Champlain* district, *QuébecCité* highlights the *Château Frontenac*, and gives less visibility to the fortifications and other targeted points.

Figure 7: Old Quebec sites represented on Quebec City
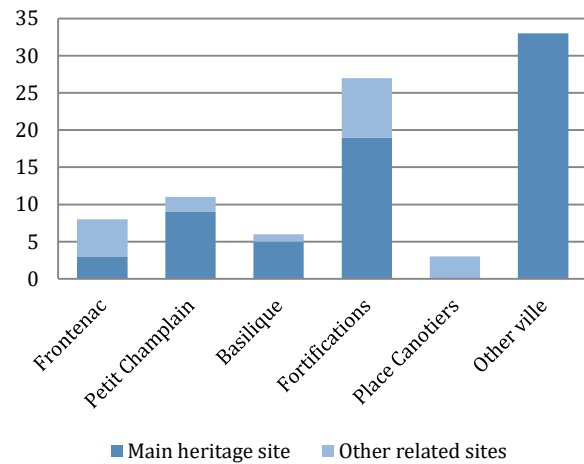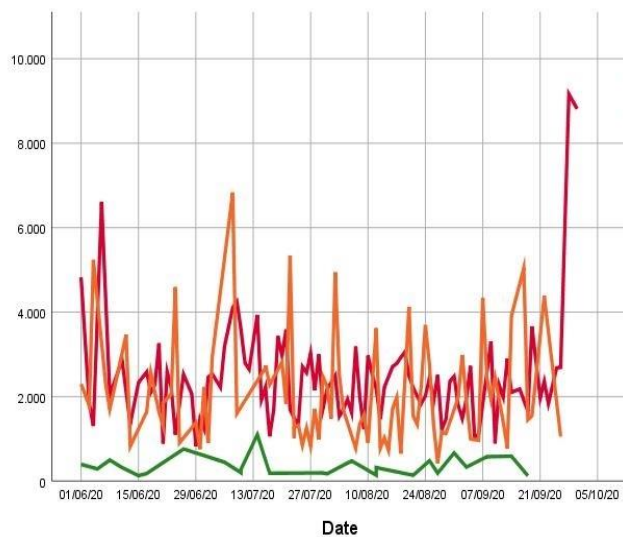

Source: Personal elaboration

The profile of Quebec City almost exclusively evokes and illustrates places located outside Old Quebec; only one photograph has been published in direct reference to heritage (*Place des Canotiers*).

3.6. The interactions of publications related to Quebec's heritage

In terms of interactions and the number of "Likes" obtained by the three profiles, two trends emerge (Figure 8).

On the one hand, the profiles of *QuébecCité* and *BonjourQuébec* both generate great interest among followers. *QuébecCité* exhibits greater variability in terms of "likes", with growth peaks and falls distributed throughout the period studied. *BonjourQuebec* presents a more stable disposition with two main periods of interaction (the beginning of June and the end of September) where the indicators show an increase which exceeds the average number of "likes".

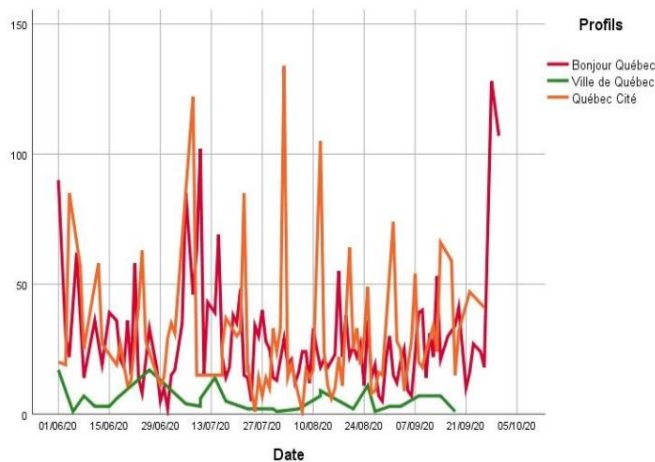Figure 8: Total number of "likes" associated with the publications of tourist sites.

Source: Personal elaboration

On the other hand, the interactions with the Quebec City profile are significantly weaker.

Figures 8 and 9 show a clear correspondence between the number of "likes" obtained by the posts and the number of comments it receives. Follower interactions go hand in hand: click on the "Like" button and post a comment on the discussion thread.

Figure 9: Total number of comments associated with the publications of tourist sites.

Source: Personal elaboration

3.6.1. Interactions of publications associated with the historic district

The analysis of the number of "likes" attributed by the geographic sites in Old Quebec (Table 3), shows that the tourist elements linked to the Historic District of Old Quebec is highly commented on by Instagram users who have subscribed to the profiles of *BonjourQuébec* and *QuébecCité* (Figure 10).

Posts featuring images of the *Château Frontenac* show the highest level of interaction, with a total of over 3.5K "likes" for the *BonjourQuébec* profile, and just under 3K for *QuébecCité*. For the latter account, the highest interaction rate is linked to the *Petit-Champlain* district. The publications referring to the *Notre-Dame-de-Québec Basilica-Cathedral* also reveal great interest among subscribers. Finally, it should be noted that the *Place des Canotiers* obtains certain notoriety at *BonjourQuébec*, non-existent among other profiles. The same situation was noted for the Fortifications, which were more "clicked" on the profile of *QuebecCité*.

Figure 10: Number of "likes" associated with tourist sites in the historic district
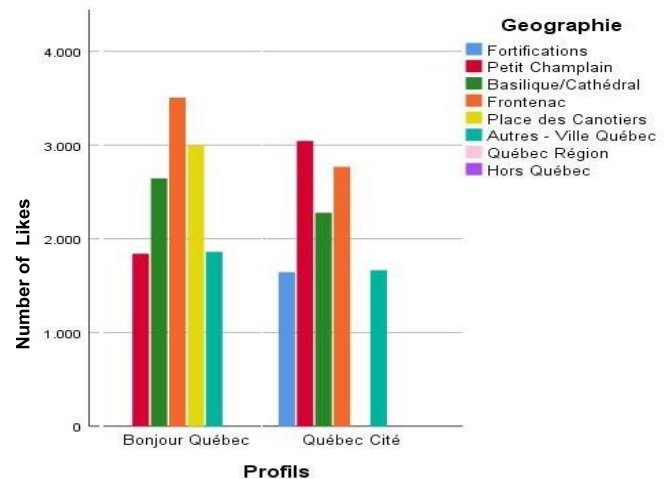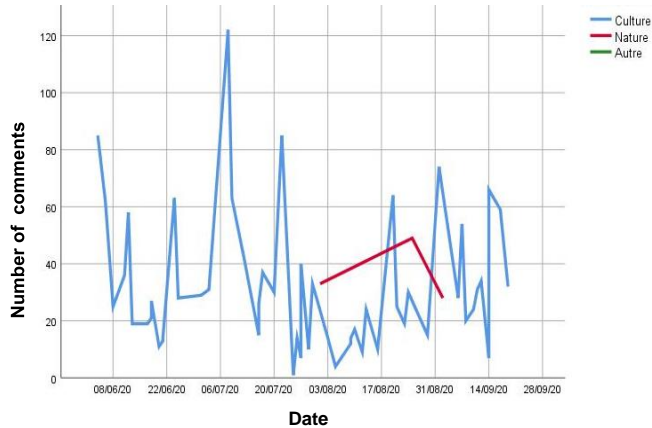

Source: Personal elaboration

The profile of the *Office de tourisme de Québec* is therefore the one that best illustrates cultural heritage, including that attached to the historic district of Old Quebec, a UNESCO World Heritage

Site. Its subscribers also comment extensively on this heritage (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Number of comments obtained by publications linked to cultural heritage sites (Quebec City Account)

Source: Personal elaboration

4. Conclusion

The tourist attractiveness of heritage sites in Quebec in the era of Covid-19 is a major issue for all the players involved in the management, promotion and enhancement of tourist and cultural sites. This exploratory study made it possible to understand a reality that goes far beyond the framework of the Quebec City site: social networks are now essential tools for the management and communication of tourist destinations. By the extent of their publications (both textual and visual), touristic and cultural destinations can reach audiences by means not available to traditional media, hence the importance of this investigation.

Numerous studies show that UNESCO World Heritage sites seem to attract mainly international visitors and first-time visitors. While the Covid-19 pandemic has limited international and national mobility in Quebec, as elsewhere in the world, how can world heritage sites and tourism industry players establish links with local and regional visitors? This question was the starting point of this work, and which led to the observation that the actors responsible for the promotion of tourism in Quebec have been able to adapt to the communication management

on Instagram while revealing a preference for promoting natural sites over cultural heritage.

After analyzing the data from four tourism and heritage stakeholders' profiles within the current health context, we were able to confirm divergent interests. Natural sites for sports and outdoor activities were the most covered by the official PC account. It is significant that the profile of the National Agency has not published anything in connection with the World Heritage site of Old Quebec, even though it is the manager of several heritage sites in Old Quebec, including the *Dufferin promenade*. Conversely, the Instagram profiles of *QuébecCité* and *BonjourQuébec* have shown a shared interest in cultural and natural tourist sites. While the OTQ has chosen to communicate visual material and information relating to the major tourist sites of Old Quebec (*Château Frontenac, Petit-Champlain* district, *Notre-Dame-de-Quebec Basilica-Cathedral*, fortifications and *place des canotiers*) on Instagram. *Tourisme Québec*'s Instagram profile maintained its mission by disseminating a variety of provincial content, including more natural content. Contrary to what was anticipated, the institutional account of the City of Quebec did not disseminate or communicate a large number of images or textual content related to local heritage sites. The city did not promote its historic sites, leaving this responsibility to the OTQ. It has focused its efforts on supporting and promoting local businesses. Its results are therefore not significant in terms of tourist destination. We therefore note that the players' dissemination strategies have sometimes tried to meet the wishes of visitors who are looking for natural sites (by promoting more natural sites), sometimes to local players and businesses (*Ville de Québec*). Cultural heritage has therefore not necessarily been at the heart of these strategies.

Finally, interactions with followers revealed excellent work on the part of the *BonjourQuébec* profile, which was able to use engagement to generate more interactions within its publications. *QuebecCité* was also able to position itself well in terms of interactions, but with less success in terms of engagement. This and its weekly evolution have not been constant on Instagram. Parks Canada has mastered

engagement, but neglected interaction indicators. Finally, the profile of the City of Quebec was the weakest, the content published on its profile does not show good indicators, as we revealed during the study.

Among the limits posed by this exploratory study, we can highlight the choice of specific sites as representatives of UNESCO's world heritage, when the district as a whole has been designated a UNESCO world heritage site. The selection of the sample on the Instagram platform is also a limitation of this study, with tourist and heritage dissemination of course taking place on several other social networks. Despite the fact that the sample was fully focused on a period already marked by the virus, the study may benefit from a more diachronic or comparative perspective. In the future, this study could be extended to include other social networks and over a longer period (before and after the pandemic). The comparative analysis with other cities where tourist monoculture has been observed would be another possibility of study.

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