Cultural Heritage, Identity, and Power Dynamics: Guiding Practices in Oradea, Romania

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Abstract. The study highlights how heritage is constructed, contested and interpreted in the multiethnic city of Oradea, Romania. Embedded in theoretical conceptual frameworks related to heritage studies, power dynamics and identity, it analyzes controversies related to the naming and renaming of monuments and public spaces across political regime changes, emphasizing how these practices reflect broader debates about public memory. The conceptual framework is consolidated by empirical data collected from 103 respondents from across 18 countries meant to spotlight the perceptions of political influence and interpretative authority in heritage governance. Oradea is used as a case study due to its multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism of Romanian, Hungarian and Jewish past to show how heritage is preserved, which institutional cultural policies are adopted and how monuments, urban public spaces and street names have been preserved or changed across political regimes changes from communism to democracy. In this scope the role of tour guides practices as cultural brokers who can shape the heritage public understanding is investigated. The article concludes that the mixed approach of political power, cultural pluralism and interpretative attitudes shape Oradea city's multicultural heritage, emphasizing both challenges and opportunities of managing diverse past heritage in contemporary Romanian cities for the capitalization of tourism.

Keywords: cultural heritage · licensing of guides · renaming public spaces · tourist guides' narrative

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1 Introduction

Heritage is a strong instrument by which societies build and negotiate their collective identity. It is a representation not only of historical facts but a process of selection and interpretation about which scholars have shown that there are political or cultural-related decisions with reference to what to keep, commemorate or erase as well as legitimacy struggles [27, 33]. In post socialist societies where such political regimes were overthrown there is the need to forge new identity and heritage becomes a contested arena. Romania stands as a relevant case for examining these dynamics. Romania has been under a communist political regime ruled by Nicolae Ceaușescu who targeted to create a labor class standardization and uniformization by demolishing historical neighbourhoods, invoking patriotism to legitimize his authority as well as heritage manipulation [16, 35]. After 1989 Romania has reconfigured its collective memory, eliminating social symbols and renegotiating the importance of public spaces [9]. These cases have been extremely complex in multiethnic societies such as Oradea where Romanian, Hungarian and Jewish history intermingle.

This article investigates how heritage, identity, and power interact in Oradea, focusing on three interconnected dimensions: (1) the theoretical mechanisms through which heritage constructs national identity; (2) the politics of monuments and street renaming in post-communist Romania; and (3) the role of tour guides as cultural brokers who shape public understanding of heritage. By combining theoretical and empirical observations of Oradea, the research widens the spectrum of debates on heritage pluralism, collective memory and urban space governance.

2 Methodology

The study synthetizes key theoretical concepts of Benedict Anderson [1], Eric Hobsbawm [13], Laurajane Smith [27], Michel Rolph Trouillot [33], Pierre Nora [23] which provide the conceptual frame for understanding how heritage can related to identity building and political power. Further references relate to the contributions of Verdery [35, 36], Light and Young [16–18], Czepczyński [7] and Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge [2] on post socialist collective memory and urban toponymy.

These references contribute to the analysis of communist and post communist heritage practices of Romania. Oradea acts as a case study due to its multicultural history and visible heritage plurality. The analysis examines the Hungarian and Jewish heritage preservation within the city, the street renaming processes after 1989 and tourist guiding dynamics within the local context. The case study approach allows a nuanced exploration of how theoretical concepts manifest in a specific urban environment. This methodology enables a comprehensive examination of heritage as a political and cultural process, integrating theoretical insights with empirical observations.

The study represents a mixed research that combines conceptual analysis with an exploratory empirical component, the former relying on consecrated theory from heritage and collective memory research conceptualizing cultural heritage as a mediated social and political process. For the latter empirical component relying on primary data, which were collected by the means of an online survey designed through Google Forms

software, applied during January–March 2026 to 108 participants from 18 countries, mostly acquainted with the cultural heritage of Oradea, allowed the integration of both local as well as international perspectives. The survey was sent to tourism enrolled students doing their practice of tour guiding at the University of Oradea (Romania); students in architecture from Kore and Mediterranea universities (Italy); as well as other partner countries of the University of Oradea (Romania) providing tourism education as well as staff engaged in the tour guiding activity of Oradea city, Romania. The survey included seven themed items related to the perception of the political influence over managing heritage and guiding practices, completed by two demographic variables about age and origin country. The response rate was of 103 respondents from 18 countries (i.e. Azerbaijan, Benin, Ethiopia, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Namibia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Republic of Kosovo, Somalia, Spain, Togo, Ukraine) (Fig. 1). Most respondents (i.e.35,6%) are aged between 18–29 years, closely followed by of 34,6% respondents aged between 45–59 years; 17,3% are aged over 60 years versus 4,8% aged between 35–44 years. The responses were measured using a Likert scale and descriptively analyzed in line with the theoretical framework. The analysis aims to obtain analytical conclusions rather than statistical generalizations, having acknowledged the convenience sampling limitations.

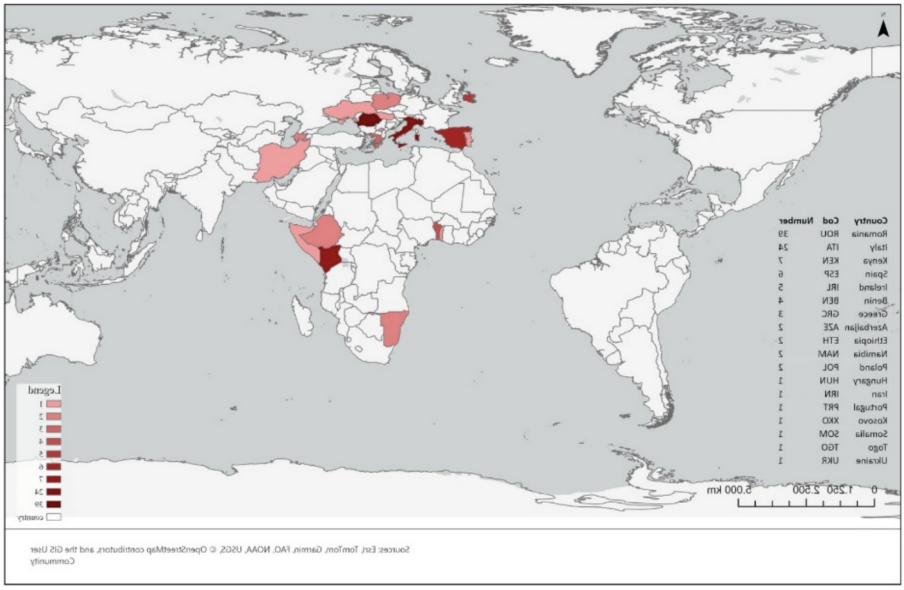

Fig. 1. Respondents' origin country. Source: Authors, based on the survey applied in January–March 2026

International respondents were included because heritage interpretation—especially in tourism and guided tours—is shaped not only by local memory politics but also by the expectations, perceptions, and interpretive frameworks of global audiences. Since

Oradea's heritage is consumed, evaluated, and narrated to transnational tourists, gathering perspectives from respondents outside Romania strengthens the study's ability to analyze how heritage narratives travel, are understood, and are contested across cultural contexts.

3 Theoretical Framing – Heritage, Power and Identity

3.1 Heritage as a Tool for National Identity

Heritage plays a central role in the construction of national identity. Benedict Anderson [1] famously described nations as "imagined communities," held together not by face-to-face interaction but by shared symbols, narratives, and rituals. Heritage—monuments, museums, commemorations, and preserved sites—provides the material and symbolic infrastructure through which these imagined communities are sustained. Hobsbawm and Ranger [13] argue that many traditions presented as ancient are in fact modern inventions designed to legitimize political authority. States selectively elevate certain historical figures, events, and cultural practices to create a sense of continuity and unity. This process often involves the suppression or marginalization of alternative histories that do not fit the desired national narrative.

Trouillot [33] underlines the fact that historical production is shaped by power at each step, from the creation of archives to the construction of collective memory. Laurajane Smith's [27] concept of "Authorized Heritage Discourse" continues to demonstrate how official heritage narratives privilege the elites' monumental and majority cultural expressions while it marginalizes the minorities' voices.

Ceaușescu's Romania provides an example of heritage manipulation. The regime has demolished historical neighborhoods, including churches and synagogues meanwhile building a monumental socialist architecture such as the House of the People [16, 35], advocating for the socialist state. This conservation and selective erasure exemplify how heritage can be used as an instrument to build a politically useful past.

3.2 Controversies Around Monuments and Renaming Public Spaces

Monuments and place names shape collective memory, thus according to Pierre Nora [23] heritage places can stabilize certain narratives of the past and illustrate the era that produced them.

Young [39] debates on a renegotiation of collective memory (rather than its erasure) when heritage such as monuments or street names of oppressive and authoritarian leaders are removed. Trouillot's analysis [33] over history's silence underlines the fact that public commemorations invoke both remembrance as oblivion.

In post-communist Romania, the renaming of streets and removal of socialist monuments have reflected the will to cleanse the public space of discredited symbols [9]. Light and Young [17] show that the name of streets during socialism served as ideological tools integrating the regimes' values into day-by-day life and that 1989 regime change to democracy, cities aimed to restore pre-communist names or introduce new ones, aligned with the national and democratic narratives. As Oradea is a multiethnic city, the renaming initiatives had to navigate through Romanian, Hungarian and Jewish histories, therefore intermingling cultures that are currently capitalized for tourism.

3.3 Power Dynamics Between Majority and Minority Cultures

Heritage may often replicate power hierarchies, and an Authorized Heritage Discourse Smith's [27] may privilege majority narrative as the genuine embodiment of the national identity and minority cultures can be shaded or marginalized. Linda Tuhiwai Smith [28] shows how indigenous cultural practices are often reformulated through colonial or nationalist lens, devoid of political meaning and transformed into consumable symbols. Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge [2] claim that multicultural societies must admit the past's plurality embodied into their landscape. Not observing this aspect can lead to a "dissonant heritage" in which conflicting nations coexist in tension.

Even UNESCO-labelled heritage designations, often seen as empowering, can consolidate asymmetries by freezing traditions into static forms or privileging majority interpretations [4]. These dynamics highlight the fact that heritage is not only a record of the past but rather a power arena where cultural domination is asserted and contested.

4 Heritage Politics in the Multicultural City of Oradea

4.1 Managing Majority and Minority Heritage

Oradea is a city in which Romanian, Hungarian and Jewish history meet. Unlike many post-socialist cities which attempted to homogenize their heritage, Oradea adopted a heritage pluralism model. This approach is in line with Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge's [2] argument according to which multicultural cities should treat heritage as a "shared resource".

Oradea city has kept Hungarian monuments and statues, preserved the name of Hungarian historic streets, has restored Jewish synagogues such as the Zion Neologue Synagogue from Independentei street and the Orthodox Synagogue from the Mihai Viteazu street. These efforts ensure that minorities' history remains visible within the urban landscape. Furthermore, Oradea provides a complete education pathway in Hungarian language, from kindergarten to university studies showing an engagement and support towards cultural living practices, not only of symbolic heritage.

Oradea benefits of a wide multiethnic and pluri-confessional cultural heritage of Romanian, Hungarian and Jewish origin among which the later translate in the territory into synagogues and residential and commercial buildings referred to as palaces given their monumental size. Most Art Nouveau buildings in Oradea were the property of the rich bourgeoisie of Jewish origin [12]. But unfortunately, out of 15040 Jews that could be counted at the flourishing economic and artistic boom of Oradea in 1910 [31], in 2025 there are 134 persons of Mozaic confession [11].

The city of Oradea boosts a prolific cultural production from the fin-de-siècle and debut-de siècle Art Nouveau period with 253 recorded historical monument buildings according to the List of the Historical Monument Buildings of Oradea in 2004 [12]. Besides architectural production, the city cultural output was highly intensive with more than 24 existing printing houses at around the year 1900, a trendy lifestyle that attracted tourists who could be accommodated and fed within more than 123 touristic units. Following this development trend, in 1903 the city was electrified with public lightning

and the first functional tram lines in 1906 so that urbanistically the city gains its status of a reputed western city during 1985–1915 [3].

Given this multifaceted heritage landscape with the city's tangible and institutional commitments to heritage pluralism, it is unsurprising that respondents express nuanced views regarding the political dimensions of heritage governance, as reflected in the survey results. Therefore the city's commitment to preserving Romanian, Hungarian, and Jewish heritage side by side fosters a public awareness that recognizes political influence without reducing heritage to a battleground of absolutes.

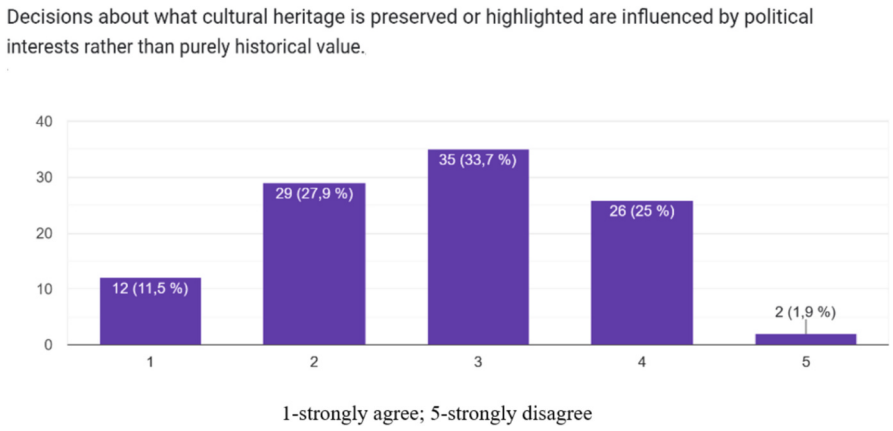

Fig. 2. Respondents' survey results. Source: Authors, survey applied during January–March 2026

The distribution of responses shows that most participants acknowledge some political influence on cultural-heritage decisions, with answers clustering around the mid-range rather than the extremes (Fig. 2), indicating that respondents consider heritage governance as a nuanced process, both shaped by historical as well as political factors. The dominance of the 2–4 category shows ambivalence rather than polarization lining with the academic debates according to which heritage is inherently political [10, 27]. The small number of agreements or strong disagreements continues to advocate for the idea of contested perceptions, but not absolute according to Tunbridge and Ashworth's concept of "dissonant heritage" [34].

4.2 Renaming Public Spaces in Oradea

The remaining of streets after 1989 illustrates how collective heritage is renegotiated after the political regime's change to democracy. The erasing of socialist names and renaming heritage monuments and streets after pre-communist figurehead names took place concomitant with debates concerning the Hungarian cultural landmarks. Czepczyński [7] describes it as the "politics of cultural landscape" in which concurrent groups try to inscribe their identities in the urban space.

Verdery [35] notes that post socialist memory politics often involve struggles over legitimacy, with different communities mobilizing history to assert belonging. In Oradea,

the coexistence of Romanian and Hungarian street names reflects an ongoing negotiation of identity in a multicultural context.

Thus the 23 August Park, as it was named during the communist regime of 1950–1989, which stood for the Communist Party celebration day through chants for the leader was renamed after the Revolution of 1989 when Romania turned to democracy into 1st December Park (i.e. date related to Transylvania, Banat, Crisana and Maramures regions' Union Day with the Romanian Principalities which occurred on 1st December 1918). The currently-named Balcescu Park was named in the 1900s the Rhédey Park [8] when it was under Hungarian occupation. The currently-named I.C. Bratianu Park was named during the communist years 1950–1989 Laborers' Park. On the other hand, Hungarian-named parks can be found in Oradea as the Petöfi Sándor named after the Hungarian revolutionary poet Petöfi Sándor, indicating Oradea's city openness toward multiethnic cultural values.

Many public squares of Oradea bore Hungarian, German or Jewish names in the 19th and early 20th centuries, also known as the Belle Epoque time, such as the pedestrian and currently named street Vasile Alecsandri which was called Grune Baum Gasse; the Herrenstrasse which is currently the Archbishop Roman Ciorograriu Street; the currently-named Union Square which was named Kispiac ter during the years 1714–1740; the currently-named pedestrian Republicii street bore multiple names as Nagy Utca (Great Street) in 1927, Fo utca (Main Street) in 1890; Racoczy in 1900 and Ferdinand Street in 1920 [24]. Not only squares bore the pledge of the historic times they witnessed but also individual attractions or hotels such as Pannonia Hotel in 1904, which was renamed simply Palace during the interwar period and since 1944 Transilvania Hotel. Many attractions from the historical centre of Oradea, which survived the large-scale demolition campaigns of the communist period (1950–1989) aimed at creating standardized workers' housing blocks designed to increase residential density and impose urban uniformity and standardization have been accredited their initial names in the present time, be they Hungarian, German or Jewish-stemmed, so from this point of view we can refer to a heritage positive discrimination from the city's governance. Oradea is a border multiethnic and multicultural city and this influence is strongly visible in the historical city of Oradea, it's as if the historical periods are printed on the buildings' facades of Baroque, Art Nouveau, Neo-Brancovenesc/Romanian and eclectic styles.

Most of the cultural heritage of Oradea bear Hungarian or Jewish names due to the past Austro-Hungarian occupation, which were not changed after Romania passed from a socialist regime to democracy on 22nd December 1989, therefore some examples of palaces or architectural buildings bearing Hungarian or Jewish names, taken after their initial property owners refer to Moskovits Miksa Palace, Rimanoczy Kalman senior Palace, Vigado Halls of the Black Eagle Palace, Ulmann Palace, Bartsch Palace, Szechenyi Hotel, Adalbert Racs House [25].

Furthermore Romania passed a property restitution law in 2000 (Parliament of Romania, 2000) through which all former landlords or their heirs regained their properties taken by the socialist state during 1947–1989, among which in the case of Oradea city, there were many important heritage buildings such as the most monumental heritage building for Oradea: the Baroque Palace which hosted the Crișana Land Museum during 1971–2006 was transferred to its former owners and is currently the headquarters of

the Roman-Catholic Bishopric. The Baroque Palace was built during 1761–1777 by the Viennese architect Franz Anton Hillebrandt, is U-shaped with a façade of 102,3 m^2, hosting over 100 rooms [24].

The built heritage charm and buildings' monumentality of Oradea city is given by the fact that it witnessed an architectural boom during the Belle Epoque area which overlapped the beginning of the 20th century alongside a social, economical and cultural development. Trade owners would display their wealth and status through their residences, some even putting their monograms on the building facades (i.e. Fuchsl Palace) or signs of the trade they professed (i.e. Moskovits-Miksa Palace) as a sign of distinction. Therefore the real estate is booming with administrative, cultural and trade edifices, witnessing an increment in the rented palaces and villas, which were designed by local or Austro-Hungarian architects [25].

The public organization named the Foundation for the historical Monuments Protection was set up in 2011 and administers and uses the brand Oradea Heritage to promote its heritage. It coordinates restauration projects, administers historical buildings, transforms buildings into dynamic cultural spaces, organizes guided tours, exhibitions, cultural events and promotes Oradea heritage nationally and internationally.

5 Guiding and Heritage Interpretation

5.1 Tour Guides as Cultural Brokers

Tour guides can play a crucial role in shaping tourists' vision about heritage. Cohen [6] describes guides as "cultural brokers" who mediate between tourists and local communities and whose narratives can strengthen or challenge the official discourses about heritage.

In Oradea, where Romanian, Hungarian and Jewish histories coexist, guides can underline different aspects of the past according to their own cultural context. This selective framing can influence the way in which visitors perceive identity and local heritage. Trouillot's [33] argument according to which historical narratives are vulnerable to manipulation is very relevant here, so that without proper regulation, guides detain a significant interpretative authority shaping public memory in ways which can support or suppress heritage pluralism. This can particularly resonate with the case of Oradea as it is located at a border area, only 10 km away from Hungary, prone to the distance-decay effect [38], so that tourists from the neighboring Hungarian country have been recorded constantly throughout the city and its contested past may influence foreign unlicensed tour guides' potentially biased narrative. Romania does not have a tourist police to regulate the tour guiding activity and this oversight can allow these transgressions. These practices can consolidate the majority's narratives or fuel a "dissonant heritage".

The chart illustrates that most respondents tend to agree that foreign unlicensed tourist guides can increase the risk of a favoring or unproper heritage interpretation, 34,6% choosing "1" and other 23,1% choosing "2" (Fig. 3). This general trend reflects the public concern about heritage mediators' feasibility and responsibility. Such perceptions align with those of the researchers who claim that heritage interpretation is shaped by authority, education and power dynamics [10, 27]. A relatively small share of

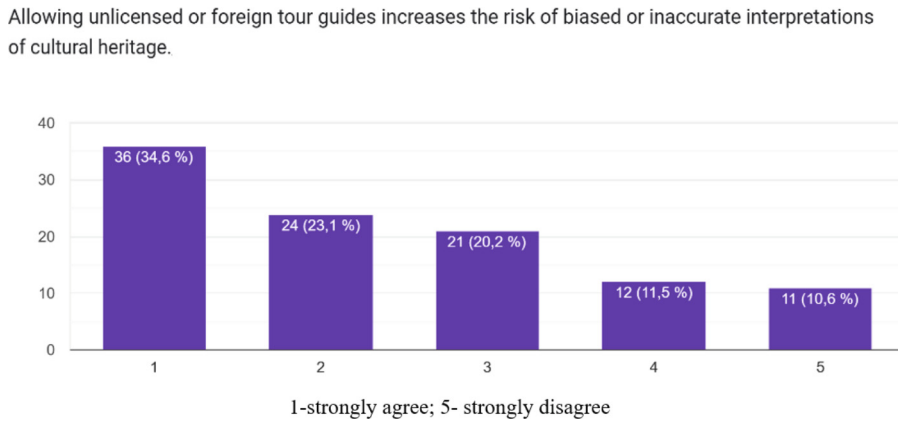

Fig. 3. Respondents' survey results. Source: Authors, survey applied during January–March 2026

strong agreement (10,6%) suggests that despite the admitted risks, they are not considered absolute, leading to wider debates on expertise and authenticity related to heritage tourism [32].

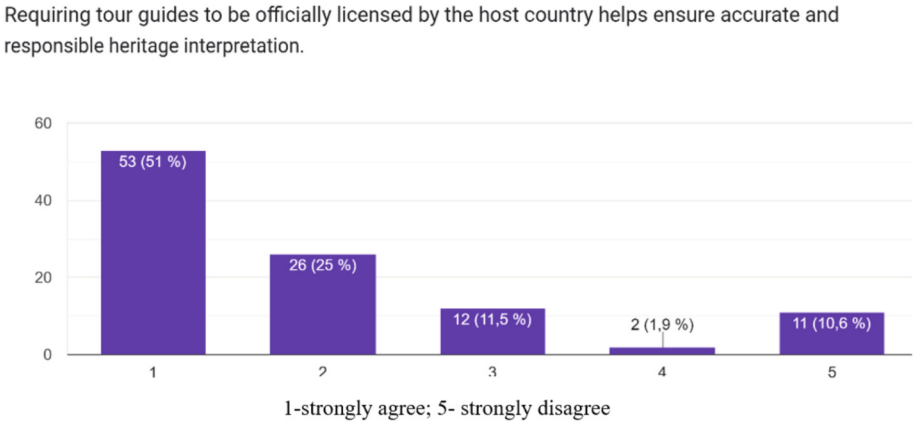

Fig. 4. Respondents' survey results. Source: Authors, survey applied during January–March 2026

The overwhelming support for mandatory licensing reinforces established research showing that trained, officially accredited guides play a crucial role in ensuring accurate, trustworthy (Fig. 4), and professionally accountable heritage interpretation [27, 32].

The concentration of responses around the middle and higher categories reflects widespread awareness that state licensing can shape heritage narratives (Fig. 5), echoing scholarly critiques of how official regulation often reinforces dominant political interpretations [10, 27, 34].

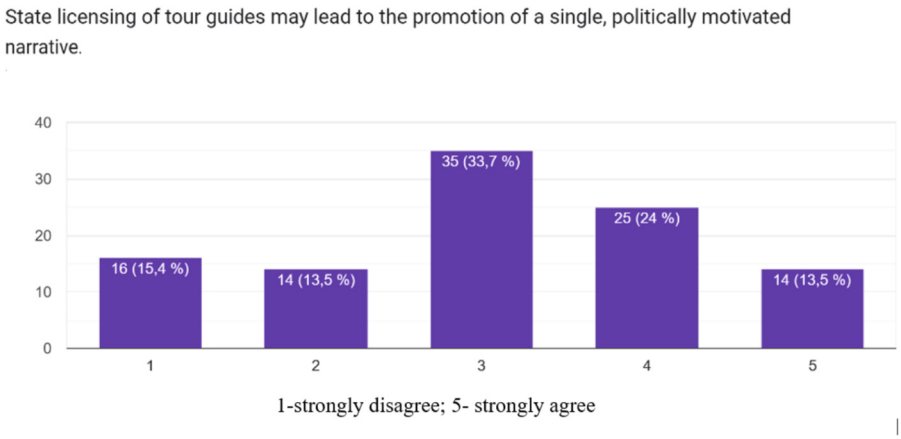

Fig. 5. Respondents' survey results. Source: Authors, survey applied during January–March 2026

5.2 Legal Framework

In Romania the tourist guides' evolution in time is incremental, from merely 24 tourist guides in 1998 to 4,335 licensed tourist guides in 2016 [29] with a high with a high prone towards sustainability practices of facilitating contacts between tourists and locals [30].

At the level of Romania the licensing of tour guides is done according to the Law order 180/2023, modified into 3397/2024 and published in the Official Gazette [15] regarding the conditions and criteria for the selection, schooling, certification and use of tourist guides by the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism. All the methodological norms are stipulated with this law order alongside the final dispositions at Chapter V, Article 19 which require that all tourist guides should wear the badge and make proof of the certificate that can be checked anytime by the competent authorities. Within the same article, at number (2) it is mentioned that all foreign tourist guides who are temporarily or occasionally guiding in Romania are not allowed to interpret within the tourist attractions and should appeal to attested local guides. The sanctions are not stipulated within the law and we deem it leaves room for foreign guides to interpret the cultural heritage from the outdoors as well as history based on their good or least good intentions, especially in the case of contested borderland spaces which were under subsequent occupations across time. In order to become a tourist guide in Romania, there's a qualification course that should be attended by candidates with a minimum Baccalaureate diploma, after which a certificate is obtained and eventually the tourist guide badge which should be renewed every 5 years. The latter entitles graduates to legally function as tourist guides, professions categorized into local, national or specialized tourist guide.

The survey's major trend towards an agreement that non-local or international guides can enrich heritage interpretation supports the idea that the strict licensing framework of Romania – despite regulating access to indoor attractions - should continue to admit the added value of diverse external perspectives, mainly in areas with a contested heritage (Fig. 6).

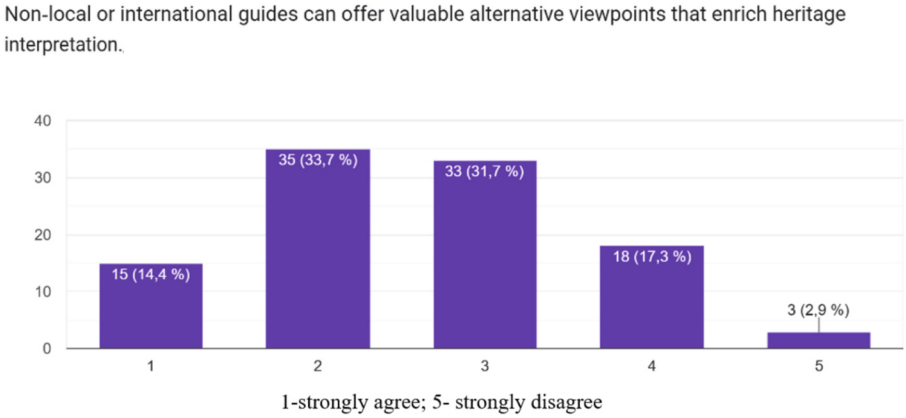

Fig. 6. Respondents' survey results. Source: Authors, survey applied during January–March 2026

5.3 Tour Guiding Practices in Oradea City

At the level of Oradea city there is a legal entity that manages and promotes tourism, known as APTOR (i.e. The Association for the Promotion of Tourism in Oradea and its Region) and it operates the "Visit Oradea" brand, the city's official tourist information platform. Within their activity report for 2025 [37] it is stated that for the year 2025 they provided gratuities and benefits for the tourists visiting Oradea through their 5th campaign if the tourists are accommodated within a rated tourist accommodation unit for a minimum of two consecutive nights such as: gratuities to all museal sections pertaining to the Cris Land Museum – Museum Complex and Bihor Heritage Protection Foundation; 24-hour free transport within all the transport network; discounts to partner cafes and restaurants. This campaign yielded very good results such as a minimum stay of 4,05 nights and 86,09% domestic tourist as well as 13,91% foreign tourists whose origin country is mainly from Hungary, followed by Germany, Poland, USA, France, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Israel, Moldavian Republic and Austria. Thus as a tourist destination, in 2025 Oradea consolidated its 8th rank at the level of the country, as in the previous two years of 2023 and 2024 with 220,277 tourists. Though APTOR, Oradea promotes itself as a surprisingly accessible and unique destination for spontaneous city breaks. It is a European city with Art Nouveau architecture, active cultural life and a slow living urban environment. It advertises itself in the social media through Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, DOOH campaigns on digital Metrorex screens in Bucharest and collaborations with influencers. APTOR's video postings advertising campaigns triggered many online views of 4.766.838 on Instagram and 5.037.800 views on Facebook (Visit Oradea, 2025).

Part of the same advertising strategy, Visit Oradea has initiated in 2022 the project of providing free guided tours which has uninterruptedly continued until 2026 and which recorded in 2025 a number of 1854 attendees eager to discover the history and architecture of Oradea. In the same year the night guided tours were added, amounting to 54 guided tours that occurred during 30th May–14th September 2025. These tours were provided by licensed tour guides, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and upon request also in English and Hungarian languages. Furthermore, in 2025, Visit Oradea in partnership with Spark Communication continued to promote the city for visitation through the

Oradea City Hunt experience to which 323 participants were recorded within 17 tours. Oradea City Hunt is a project meant to target people who want to discover Oradea's hidden gems in an interactive manner.

The strong public agreement that tourists benefit from hearing multiple perspectives, as shown in the graph (Fig. 7), directly reinforces Visit Oradea's strategy of offering diverse, licensed, and multilingual guided experiences—ranging from free historical tours to night tours and the interactive City Hunt—which collectively broaden the interpretive voices available to visitors.

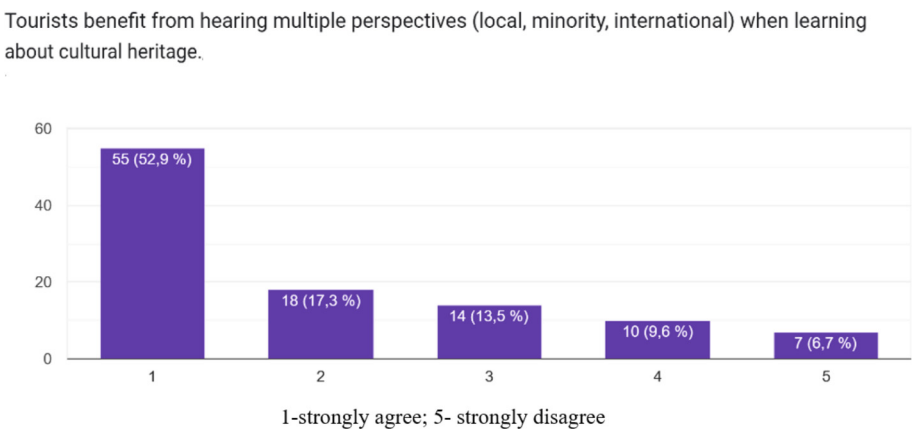

Fig. 7. Respondents' survey results. Source: Authors, survey applied during January–March 2026

Limitations concerning the study relate to the sample's representativeness given that most respondents are from Romania and Italy which might limit results' generalization to diverse tourist populations who are lower represented in the study, as well as limitations related to Oradea's local context. Notwithstanding, the research was meant to gain analytical insights rather than statistical generalizations.

6 Discussions and Conclusions

Heritage in Romania, and particularly in Oradea is shaped by complex interactions between political power, cultural pluralism, and interpretive authority. Theoretical frameworks from Anderson [1], Hobsbawm [13], Smith [27], Trouillot [33], and others reveal how heritage constructs national identity through selective preservation and erasure. Post communist memory politics further complicate these dynamics, as societies renegotiate public memory after regime change.

The results of the survey confirm theories according to which cultural heritage is perceived as a negotiated political process and less an instrument of political absolute domination supporting theories connected to authorized heritage discourse [27] and dissonant heritage [34] applied in an urban multicultural southeastern European context. The study bridges the gap between heritage studies, memory politics and tour guides' practices, an often marginalized actor in the heritage literature. Whereas most studies

focus on monuments, the state and urban policies, the current study shows that guiding interpretation is key for exercising symbolic power. The respondents of the survey admit the existence of a political influence over heritage, and express a rather nuanced positioning. As far as tour guides' activity is concerned the respondents show high credibility in licensed guides and the risk perception associated with unlicensed guiding as well as a conditioned acceptance of foreign perspectives. The results support studies of tour guides as mediators between heritage and consumers [6], unlicensed tourist guiding that can create subjective narratives [33] and field expertise legitimating public trust into heritage interpretation. Tourist police which Romania does not currently have could exercise control and fill the gap of the discontinuity between regulation and practice at an institutional level. Compared to other European Union member countries, a union which Romania joined in 2007, the existence of a tourist police or proposed temporary/specialized police bodies exist in countries such as Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, Greece, Croatia and Bulgaria especially in areas with an increased tourist flow and is meant to assist tourists [22], prevent crime rate [5, 20], prevent abuse and control guides' activity [14, 20].

The approach of Oradea city to heritage highlights both the challenges and opportunities of managing a multicultural history. City heritage preservation of Hungarian and Jewish values, besides the Romanian ones, reflect an engagement towards heritage pluralism. Notwithstanding, the lack of tourist police increases vulnerabilities [22] as guides can deliver selective or biased narratives which challenge official efforts of promoting inclusion.

Overall, Oradea shows how tourist heritage can function simultaneously as a resource for inclusion and a site of contestation. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing policies that promote cultural recognition, social cohesion, and historically grounded dialogue in multicultural societies. The case of Oradea city offers a compelling model for how Eastern European cities can navigate layered identities while fostering responsible and pluralistic heritage interpretation.

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