

## Literary parks in Europe as entrepreneurial models of cultural tourism

Fotini Maniou <sup>1,\*</sup>, Maria Manola <sup>2</sup>, Ioanna Maniou <sup>1</sup> Roido Mitoula <sup>1</sup> and Ioannis: Pagkalos <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Urban and Regional Development, Harokopion University of Athens, Greece.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Tourism and Management, University of West Attica, Greece.

<sup>3</sup> Medical School, University of Rome Sapienza.

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### Abstract

This study focuses on the role of literary parks as innovative entrepreneurial models within the framework of cultural tourism. Literary parks are not merely spaces for remembrance and the cultivation of literary heritage; they emerge as strategic tools for local development, offering multiple social and economic benefits. By examining their characteristics and objectives, the study analyzes how these parks combine cultural value with entrepreneurial function, contributing both to the formation of cultural identity and the enhancement of visitor engagement. At the same time, the challenges they face—such as sustainability, the need for innovation, and resource management—are explored, along with their prospects for further development as competitive products in the field of international cultural tourism.

**Keywords:** Literary Parks; Cultural Tourism; Cultural Entrepreneurship; Local Development; Sustainable Tourism

### 1. Introduction

Place or setting constitutes a fundamental element in literature, as it provides the context in which a narrative unfolds. Readers seek to understand where and when a story takes place in order to better comprehend events and characters. Space offers meaning and explanation, while simultaneously enhancing dramaturgy (Herbert, 2001).

In this context, literary parks emerge as a distinctive form of cultural tourism, as they focus on highlighting the literary identity of a place. They are closely connected to the life, inspiration, and work of authors, poets, or even literary characters. These parks encompass geographical and cultural spaces that reflect the biographical, natural, intellectual, and emotional world of a creator: authors' homes, literary trails, historical buildings, museums, landscapes, as well as traditions, gastronomy, arts, and sounds associated with literary memory (Quinteiro and Marques, 2022).

The creation of a literary park is based both on the biography and works of an author and on the cultural and natural resources of a region and its local community (Maniou, Mitoula and Manola, 2024). The experience it offers is multidimensional: it goes beyond reading a text and transforms literature into a lived and sensory event. Visitors "experience" literature in the place that inspired it, enhancing their connection with cultural heritage and promoting the development of literary tourism (Roberts, 2022).

### 2. Historical Development of Literary Parks

The concept of literary tourism emerged in the early 19th century, originating in England—a country that produced some of the greatest works of world literature, where readers began seeking the places that inspired their favorite authors (Herbert, 2001).

\* Corresponding author: Fotini Maniou

The idea of literary parks, however, was born in Italy in the early 1990s, initiated by Stanislao Nievo, the great-grandson of Ippolito Nievo. His goal was to highlight and preserve the cultural heritage affected by an earthquake in Friuli, leading to the creation of the first literary park around the Colloredo di Montalbano Castle, linked to the work *Confessions* of an Italian (Fondazione Ippolito Nievo, n.d.).

The institutional and strategic development of literary parks was strengthened around 2000, with the support of the European Union, in collaboration with the Italian Tourism Organization and youth entrepreneurship bodies, and under the auspices of UNESCO (Visit Italy, n.d.). By the early 2000s, 38 parks were already operating in Italy, while today there are approximately 32, mainly in the central and southern regions of the country (Parco Letterario Carlo Levi, n.d.).

Since 2009, the management of literary parks has been assigned to Paesaggio Culturale Italiano Srl, a company that combines natural beauty with cultural heritage. The company oversees a national and international network of parks extending beyond Italy, including Norway and France, aiming to preserve and promote cultural memory through literature (University for Foreigners of Perugia, n.d.).

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### **3. Examples Of Literary Parks in Europe**

#### **3.1. Parco Letterario Giosuè Carducci – Castiglione di Garfagnana (Italy)**

The Giosuè Carducci Literary Park is a characteristic example of the harmonious coexistence of nature and literature. It spans an area of hills, vineyards, olive groves, and historic villages where the poet spent his youth. Since its establishment in the 1990s, it has become a vibrant cultural center. Visitors explore spaces with authentic 19th-century furniture, Carducci's library, and exhibitions of his personal belongings. Literary trails, with signs quoting excerpts from his works, turn the visit into an experience of memory and inspiration. At the same time, the park supports the local economy through guesthouses, restaurants, and cultural tours (Parco Letterario Giosuè Carducci, n.d.).

#### **3.2. Parco Letterario Carlo Levi – Aliano (Italy)**

Founded in 1998, the Carlo Levi Park combines historical memory with an experiential introduction to the region. Inspired by the work *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, the park highlights the social, anthropological, and cultural dimensions of Southern Italy. Visitors experience the author's exile while engaging with the natural beauty and gastronomic traditions of the area. The park functions as a promoter of sustainable tourism, offering guided tours, events, and activities that strengthen local identity (Fondazione Ippolito Nievo, n.d.; Parco Letterario Carlo Levi, n.d.).

#### **3.3. Brontë Parsonage Museum and Literary Trail – Haworth (England)**

The Brontë sisters' home, operating as a museum since 1893, has become a global reference point for literature enthusiasts. Haworth offers a unique experiential journey: visitors walk the paths that inspired the classic novels, while the museum displays personal items, manuscripts, and editions. The Brontë Society fosters a modern culture of inclusion and equality, making the site accessible and welcoming. The local community benefits substantially, as thematic tourism supports hospitality businesses, souvenir shops, and cultural activities (Brontë Parsonage Museum, n.d.).

#### **3.4. James Joyce Centre – Dublin (Ireland)**

In the heart of Dublin, in an impressive Georgian house, the James Joyce Centre promotes the work and heritage of the great author. Exhibitions, lectures, guided tours, and educational workshops immerse visitors in Joyce's world. A landmark event is the annual Bloomsday, celebrating *Ulysses* with theatrical performances, readings, and literary walks through the city. The experience is urban yet deeply immersive, while tourism significantly boosts the local economy (James Joyce Centre, n.d.).

#### **3.5. Park of Greek Writers – Athens**

In Greece, no organized literary park exists yet in the European sense of the term. Nevertheless, noteworthy initiatives point the way forward. A characteristic example is the Park of Greek Writers in Athens, a tree-filled area surrounding the Municipality of Athens' Cultural Center, hosting busts and statues of important authors. From the 1990s to the early 2000s, it was enriched with outdoor sculptures, transforming the space into a living "sculpture gallery" of modern Greek literature. Although it lacks the structured framework of a literary park, it functions as a significant cultural hub, integrating literature into public space and creating prospects for future similar initiatives (Manola, 2023; UrbanLife.gr, 2017).

#### 4. Economic And Entrepreneurial Value of Literary Parks

Literary parks emerge as significant drivers of local development, as they connect culture with tourism and entrepreneurial activity (Maniou, Mitoula and Manola, 2025; Vouglanis et al., 2025). Through the creation of experiential activities, educational programs, and thematic events, these parks strengthen the cultural identity of regions while simultaneously promoting economic development by increasing visitor numbers and creating new jobs in sectors such as cultural tourism, education, and event management (Manola et al., 2025; Maniou et al., 2025).

The development of thematic products and services, such as guided tours, literary performances, gastronomic experiences, and digital applications, is directly linked to local entrepreneurship, enhancing economic activity in accommodations, dining, retail, and services (Maniou et al., 2025; Manola et al., 2025). At the same time, literary parks contribute to social cohesion, accessibility, and the enhancement of cultural diversity, offering platforms for intergenerational participation and collective memory (Tsatalmpasoglou et al., 2025; Maniou and Mitoula, 2025).

The implementation of cultural entrepreneurship strategies in literary parks—such as the utilization of cultural monuments, the organization of literary trails and festivals, and the development of partnerships with cultural institutions and local businesses—enables the sustainable development of communities and strengthens their competitiveness as tourist and entrepreneurial destinations (Vouglanis et al., 2025; Maniou et al., 2025; Manola et al., 2025).

Indicatively, studies in areas such as Lesvos, Lemnos, and Sicily show that the combined approach of literature, gastronomy, and cultural entrepreneurship can significantly enhance tourism, create new business products, and increase local economic activity, while simultaneously establishing a framework for sustainable and innovative development (Maniou et al., 2025; Manola et al., 2025; Tsatalmpasoglou, Kolsikoglou and Manola, 2025).

Overall, literary parks are not only spaces for cultural expression but also strategic tools for economic and entrepreneurial development, strengthening the local economy, social cohesion, and the cultural identity of communities.

Finally, it is important to highlight the productive and effective role that digital technologies play in the Literacy, Entrepreneurial and Education sectors. These technologies, such as mobile devices (29-31), a variety of ICT applications (32-36), AI and STEM ROBOTICS (37-38), and games (39-40), facilitate and enhance educational procedures such as assessment, intervention, and learning. Additionally, the use of ICTs in conjunction with theories and models of metacognition, mindfulness, meditation, and the cultivation of emotional intelligence [41-54], accelerates and improves educational and Entrepreneurial practices and outcomes, particularly in Literacy domain.

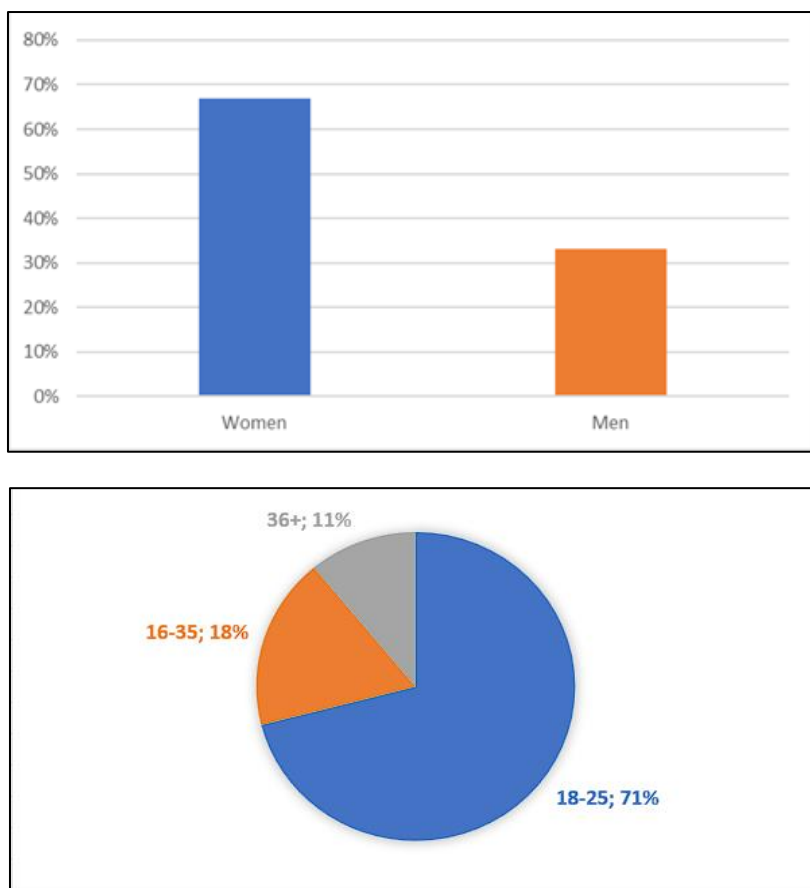
#### 5. Quantitative Research Results on Literary Parks (2025)

##### 5.1. Demographics

- The majority of participants were women (67%).
- The survey mainly targeted students and young adults aged 18-25 (71%), at the undergraduate level.
- Most participants (34%) came from the Tourism and Cultural Management field.

##### 5.1.1. Chart 1: Participants by Gender and Age

- Bars: Women / Men
- Pie: Age groups (18-25, 26-35, 36+)



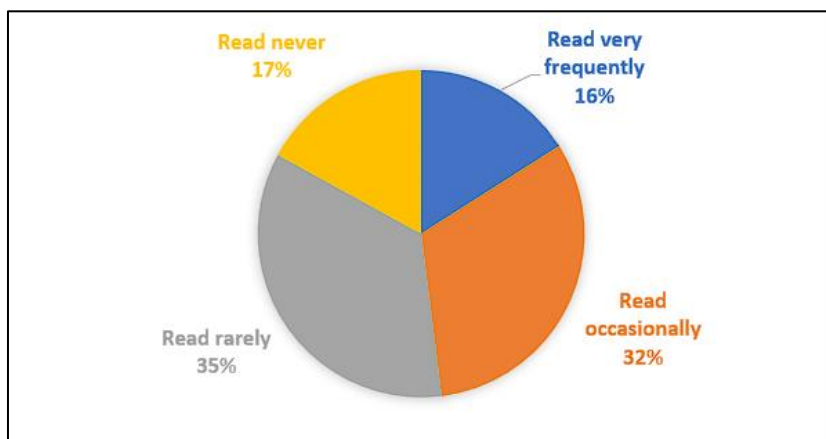
**Figure 1** Participants by Gender and Age

- **Comment:** The study focuses primarily on young adults, a key audience for cultural tourism initiatives.

## 5.2. Reading Habits

- Only 16% read literary works very frequently.
- 32% read occasionally, 35% rarely, and 17% never.

### 5.2.1. Chart 2: Frequency of Literary Reading



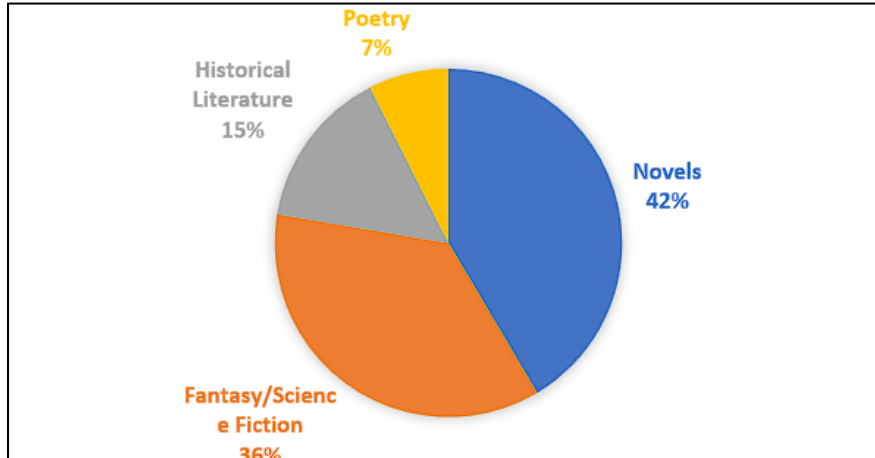
**Figure 2** FREQUENCY OF LITERARY READING

- **Comment:** Despite low reading frequency, there is general exposure to literature among participants.

### 5.3. Preferred Literary Genres

- Novels: 39%
- Fantasy/Science Fiction: 34%
- Historical Literature: 14%
- Poetry: 7%

#### 5.3.1. Chart 3 Preferred Literary Genres



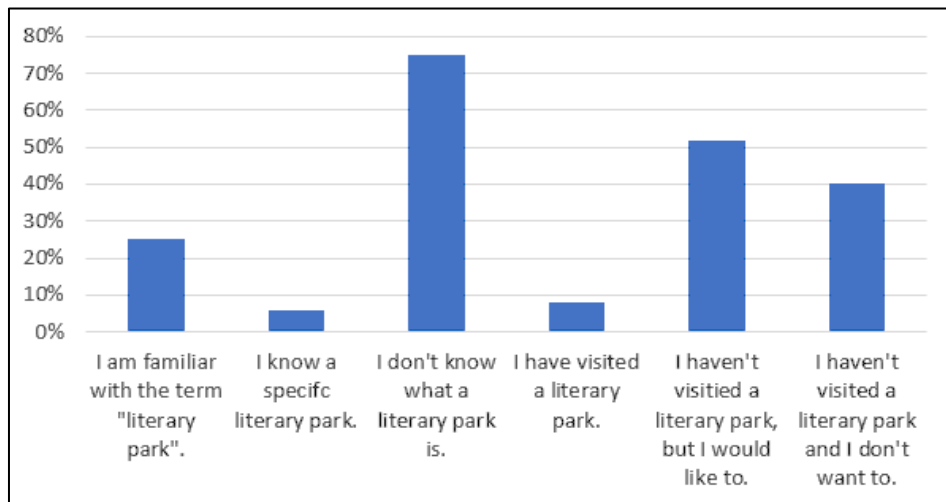
**Figure 3** Preferred Literary Genres

- **Comment:** Participants show strong interest in narrative and imaginative literature.

### 5.4. Knowledge and Experience with Literary Parks

- 25% are familiar with the term “literary park,” while 75% are not.
- Only 6% know a specific literary park.
- Examples cited include international sites (Tolkien Trail, Wordsworth Park, Salvador Dalí Museum) and local initiatives (Poets’ Road in Glyfada, Saint Demetrios Park in Athens).
- Only 8% have visited a literary park; 52% would like to, and 40% have not.

#### 5.4.1. Chart 4: Knowledge and Visits to Literary Parks



**Figure 4** Knowledge and Visits to Literary Parks

- **Comment:** Experience is limited, but interest is strong.

### 5.5. Preferred Activities in Literary Parks

- Guided tours: 31%
- Theatre/literary performances: 30%
- Libraries/exhibitions: 21%
- Educational programs: 17%

5.5.1. Chart 5: Preferred Activities

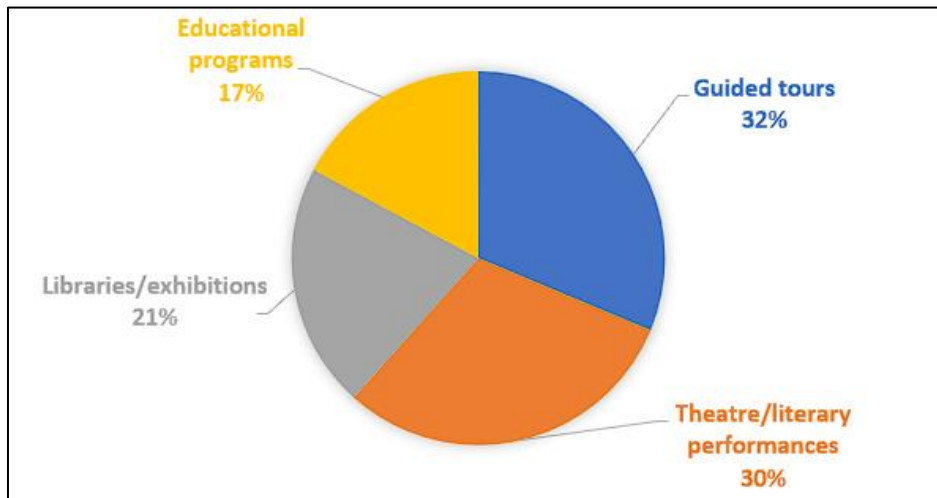


Figure 5 Preferred Activities

- **Comment:** Participants prefer interactive and immersive experiences.

### 5.6. Perceived Benefits of Literary Parks

- Promote interest in literature: 36%
- Preserve cultural heritage: 31%
- Alternative tourism: 25%
- Not beneficial: 1%
- No opinion: 7%

5.6.1. Chart 6: Perceived Benefits of Literary Parks

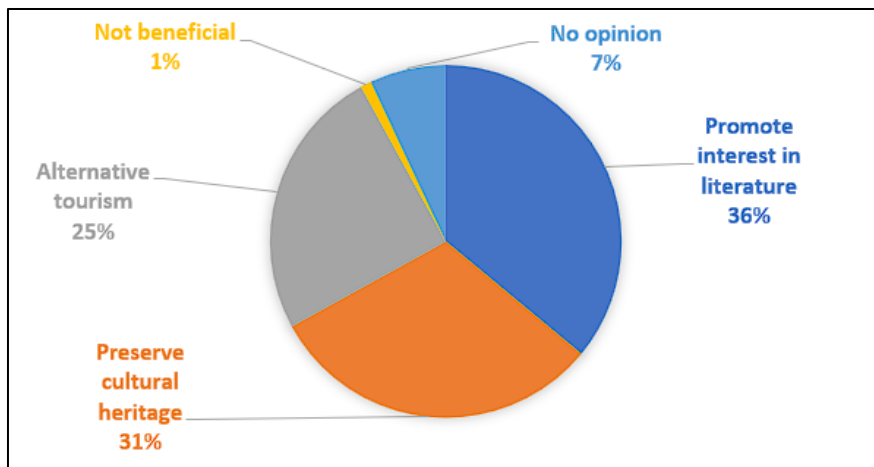


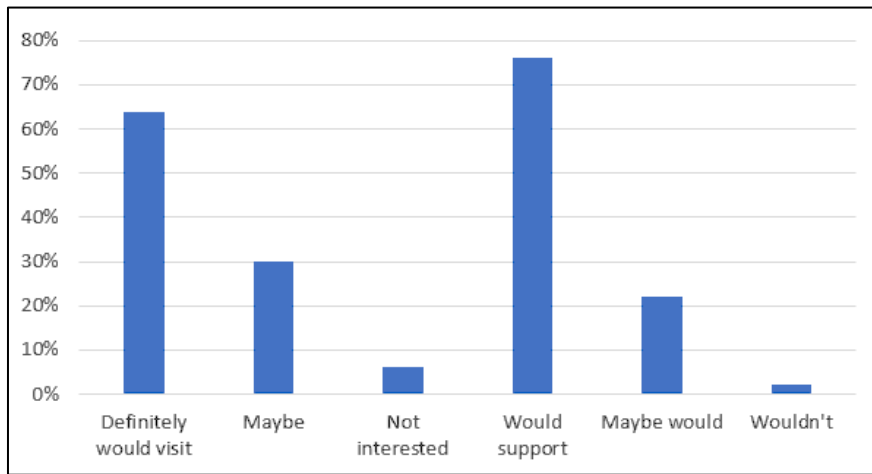
Figure 6 Perceived Benefits of Literary Parks

- **Comment:** Public perception is generally positive, acknowledging both cultural and social value.

### 5.7. Intention to Visit and Support

- Definitely would visit: 64%
- Maybe: 30%
- Not interested/negative intention: 6%
- Willingness to support the establishment of a literary park: 76%, Maybe: 22%, No: 2%

5.7.1. Chart 7: Intention to Visit and Support Literary Parks



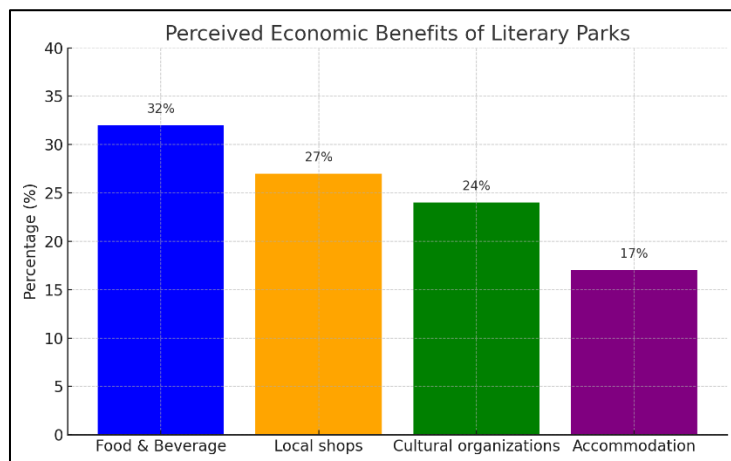
**Figure 7** Intention to Visit and Support Literary Parks

- **Comment:** High interest and positive attitude towards new cultural initiatives.

### 5.8. Economic and Social Benefits

- Food and Beverage: 32%
- Local shops: 27%
- Cultural organizations: 24%
- Accommodation: 17%

5.8.1. Chart 8: Perceived Economic Benefits of Literary Parks



**Figure 8** Literary parks are seen as tools to boost the local economy

- **Comment:** Literary parks are seen as tools to boost local economy and tourism.

## 6. Quantitative Research Conclusions

The quantitative research showed that the majority of participants were women (67%) and primarily young adults aged 18–25 (71%), mostly at the undergraduate level of education. A significant proportion came from the field of Tourism and Cultural Management (34%).

Although only 16% of participants reported reading literary works very frequently, engagement with literature is generally widespread, whether occasionally (32%) or rarely (35%), while 17% do not read at all. Preferences are dominated by novels (39%) and fantasy/science fiction literature (34%), with lower interest in historical literature (14%) and poetry (7%), indicating a focus on narrative and imaginative genres.

The research revealed that the concept of literary parks remains relatively unknown to the public: only 25% had heard the term, and just 6% knew of a specific park. This limited familiarity may be due to the low visibility of literary tourism in Greece and the lack of organized initiatives or educational integration. Nevertheless, willingness to engage with and visit such spaces is high, as 52% would like to visit a literary park, and 64% would do so if one were located near their area.

Participants expressed a desire for a rich, experiential engagement in literary parks, including information about the lives and works of authors, visits to places of inspiration, and activities recreating characters and scenes from books. Strong interest was shown in guided tours (31%) and theatrical or literary performances (30%), followed by libraries/exhibitions (21%) and educational programs (17%).

The public recognizes multiple benefits from the operation of literary parks: 36% believe they promote interest in literature, 31% that they contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, and 25% that they constitute an alternative form of tourism. Additionally, 77% believe they can enhance the region's tourism development, while their economic impact is acknowledged through support for food and beverage services (32%), local shops (27%), cultural organizations (24%), and accommodations (17%).

Support for the establishment of a literary park is high (76%), particularly when associated with job creation and broader regional development. Participants highlight the contemporary role of literary parks as spaces of inspiration, creative exploration, and psychological rejuvenation, emphasizing their value not only as thematic venues but as experiential sites connecting visitors with literature, imagination, and culture.

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## 7. Conclusion

Literary parks, as entrepreneurial models of cultural tourism, go beyond the traditional role of recreational spaces, functioning as strategic tools for cultural and tourism development. Through experiential and interactive activities, they allow the public to engage directly with literature and its creators, enhancing understanding and appreciation of literary works. Moreover, they strengthen visitors' connection with local communities, showcasing cultural heritage, local stories, and traditions, and fostering a productive dialogue between culture and community.

From an economic perspective, literary parks contribute to sustainable regional development by supporting the food and beverage sector, accommodations, local shops, and cultural organizations. Visitor attraction enhances revenue flow and creates new employment opportunities, promoting cultural tourism as an alternative and sustainable form of tourist activity.

Socially, literary parks enhance citizen participation and awareness, promoting education, creativity, and psychological well-being. They serve as spaces of inspiration, relaxation, and intellectual exploration, offering an environment where visitors can connect both with literary art and their social and cultural surroundings.

Overall, literary parks constitute comprehensive entrepreneurial and cultural models, capable of combining cultural value, economic benefit, and social cohesion, thereby promoting sustainable development at local and regional levels.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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