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**Achieving a wider audience in museums using modern
technologies.**

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I have read ADA's policy on plagiarism and certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the content of this paper, entitled *Achieving a wider audience in museums using modern technologies*, is all my own work and does not contain any unacknowledged work.

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Abstract

Low attendance rate is one of the important issues that many museums face. This capstone project aims at investigating low attendance issue in museums of Azerbaijan and addressing it through the use of modern technology. The study has revealed that the low attendance issue remains untapped due to lack of awareness on exhibitions, activities, limited digital accessibility of museums, and disinterest in history and culture. The study offers policy solutions for each of these challenges - increasing social media engagement, creating, implementing digital platforms, applications and increasing the number of thematic and interactive museums or expositions. All these proposed solutions are evaluated according to five main criterias such as effectiveness, efficiency, equity, feasibility/implementability, and flexibility/improvability. The research utilized secondary data sources and conducted surveys. The analyses and assessment reveal that in order to increase the low attendance rates in museums of Azerbaijan, government should establish digitalized environment, create interest on visitors and make investments in order to successfully tackle this important issue.

Keywords: *low attendance, digitalization, modern technology, social media, accessibility, awareness, thematic and interactive museums, culture, history.*

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List of Abbreviations

AR - Augmented Reality

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019

HKSAR - Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

ICOM - International Council on Museums

IT - Information Technology

LCSD - Leisure and Cultural Services Division

PPPs - Public-private partnerships

PR - Public Relations

UK - United Kingdom

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

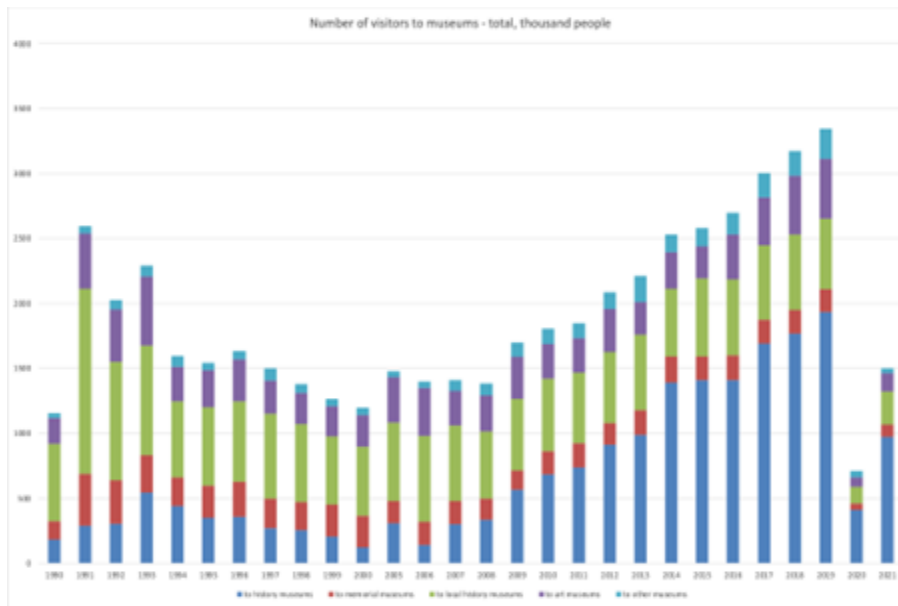
US - United States

VR - Virtual Reality

Chapter 1. Introduction

The significance of museums and other cultural establishments in cultivating nationalistic pride through Azerbaijan's complex history and age-old traditions is an undeniable fact. These institutions present a range of the country's cultural and historical wealth, not just to the local residents, but also to curious tourists from foreign countries. Considering the strategic importance of museums for the preservation of the national heritage as well as passing it down to the next generations, the Ministry of Culture is tasked with the specific mission of protecting them and enabling their prosperity. The first and foremost goal that the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan must accomplish with respect to museums, Articles 3.1.24 and 3.1.25 is to create an all-encompassing and exquisitely crafted set of guidelines, rules, and regulations for preserving and storing museum artifacts and collections in the museum fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan with utmost attention to detail. Secondly, it must stimulate and diversify its collection by procuring various cultural samples and publications, preserving, tallying, maintaining, advertising, and showcasing them within state-owned museums (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2018).

Despite the best efforts of the relevant agencies to project sustainability for institutions of cultural essence like museums, they have an array of limitations when it comes to the revenue model and the method through which the museums are sustained worldwide: the reliance on physical attendance (Cannell, 2015). However, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum industry has seen an unprecedented change in Azerbaijan, as it had around the world. In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, museums in Azerbaijan were forced to close their doors to the public for an extended period of time, saw a reduction in funding from the government, struggled with limited digital resources and expertise making it difficult for them to continue engaging with audiences and generating revenue (Radio Liberty, 2020).



We can basically compare the total number of visitors that used to attend Azerbaijani museums before pandemic to be convinced that the number has clearly dropped. Even though the museum industry in Azerbaijan was making modest revenues and could not operate to their full potential before pandemic, with the arrival of COVID-19 and country-level lockdowns, restrictions on international travel and other issues related to the pandemic, the sector lost the revenue and visitor stability which it had been building up for the past two decades, has been on a steady rise from a million visitors per annum up to more than 3 million. In 2020, this number plummeted to 711.000 attendees a year (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023). This meant a rapid drop of 79% in its annual visitors, which also translated to the revenue losses, prompting the museums which are government-funded to receive more contributions from the state budget as they became unable to finance their activities without being given an external help. Today, even after the economically damaging policies of the pandemic have been lifted, the museums are struggling to recover the previously gained momentum of increasing number of yearly attendees. This is one of the primary reasons as to why museums in Azerbaijan are trying to embrace the ICT innovations to finally makes their offerings and exhibitions open to the local as well as international public, to reclaim some of the lost popularity they used to have before the pandemic (SSCRA, 2023).

The museum is more than simply a place to put items on exhibit; it is an essential aspect of any city as an educational, entertaining, and culturally significant social institution. Despite numerous theoretical and practical difficulties, museum digitization has been a popular issue in order to provide better information resources and services in light of the recent explosion in information technology. Sounds and photographs, essential for museum curation, and easy Internet access are examples of the types of technology that benefit the long-term storage of rare items (Sun, Chiu, & Chan, 2022). In addition, this gives digital signifiers more weight with visitors because of the weight they provide to visitors' perceptions of modern and global awareness, cultural identities, and social context in shaping their worldview, expectations of relevance, and willingness to participate (Giannini & Bowen, 2019).

After the COVID-19 struck the globe, almost 95 percent of museums were forced to close, amounting to around 60,000 in total, as reported by the International Council on Museums (ICOM), severely impacting the growth of the cultural economy and posing great issues in terms of access to culture throughout the world (UNESCO, 2020). One of the fast actors on the issue was the government of Hong Kong which also preferred to pursue technology adaptation strategy for digitization of the national museums' resources. COVID-19 was viewed as an opportunity to disrupt the current quo and raise issues that had been detrimental to the sector but had not been emphasized up until that time. Although the outbreak was usually viewed unfavorably, it was acknowledged that certain positive outcomes would result. Concerns about not learning from experience and losing momentum for good change were the most prevalent. None of Hong Kong's museums were initially ready to welcome visitors in 2020 as COVID-19 epidemic caused the temporary and intermittent closure of all public museums in Hong Kong as The Leisure and Cultural Services Division (LCSD), responsible for the majority of museums open to the public, has seen a dramatic drop in museum attendance (HKSAR, 2020). COVID-19 has also had a significant impact on more than 35 independently run museums in Hong Kong. The government's lockdown strategy resulted in the closure of

the Hong Kong Maritime Museum, the city's largest privately-run museum, for 175 days that year and ending up in a total of 26,671 tourists for the 2020 fiscal year (Hong Kong Maritime Museum, 2021). Considering that these trends have been observed all over the globe, and not just limited to Hong Kong, the solutions and adaptation measures would be applicable for the rest of the world where the pandemic slashed the number of attendees and visitors for the museums. Thus, museums must continue to function in order to fulfill their objective of serving the public, no matter how trying the circumstances may be. Due to people's rising need for spiritual activities as a result of societal problems, the creation of online exhibits or electronic data-sharing platforms as a solution could be viewed as a process for setting the layout for a digital transition (Pastore, 2009). As a result of the museum staff's ability to intentionally modify visitors' search, collection, and interpretation behaviors, museums also serve as centers for cultural education (Deng, Chin, Chiu, & Ho, 2022). Online exhibitions are other interactive tools used to attract users and convert potential visitors from offline to online, and digitalization and online resources allow museums and cultural organizations to access a more diversified user base while considerably increasing page views (Lo, Chiu, & Cho, 2017; Sun, Chiu, & Chan, 2022). More online electronic resources are generally appreciated by users because of the increased emphasis on epidemic control.

There has been a dramatic shift towards digital technology in nations like the United Kingdom and the United States to help museums establish an online presence and cater to the rising popularity of viewing cultural content on the web. Some museums fell behind in the race to provide online content because they lacked the resources to rapidly accelerate the digital strategies they had already put in place or to make the necessary changes to their programming (Finnis & Kennedy, 2020). As a result, there has been a rapid reassessment of the rationale for and objective of digital engagement, positioning it not as an augmentation to usual delivery or a form of recreation, but at the core of gallery delivery (Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, 2020). Access to new resource base for educational and research purposes and activities that promote overall health and combat anxiety, mental health issues, and loneliness are just a few of the

societal benefits and public services made possible through the digital presentation of museum activities (Agostino, Arnaboldi, & Lema, 2020). Evidence suggests digital initiatives will have benefited greatly from the enhanced focus and subsequent investment that has been given to them in the wake of the epidemic, despite the many unknowns and enormous hurdles that have arisen as a result. Further substantial investment may be forthcoming as a direct result of the sector's experience, as evidenced by the fact that 75% of museums intend to increase their electronic offer and 77% intend to review their digital strategies, according to a follow-up survey conducted by ICOM in November 2020 (ICOM, 2020)

Methodology

Considering these factors and challenges our research team came up with the study to address the issue of low attendance rates in museums through the use of modern technology and applications.

This study polled Baku locals and tourists to categorize representative museum practices in Azerbaijan. This article mostly focused on publicly run museums that get their funding from the government. This article examines the period of time when museums were forced to adapt to their surroundings, sums up the many techniques and obstacles they faced, and evaluates their long-term usefulness. At this time, contemplation on the museum's rules and procedures reveals the gaps between what the institution and its visitors expect and what the museum really provides. So, this policy paper is directed by the following goals:

1. Identification of the IT challenges that Azerbaijani museums are facing,
2. Getting a better understanding of the attendance challenges of the museums in the post-pandemic period,

3. Proposition and analysis of the policy options for the specific challenges that lead to the reduced attendance of the museums in Azerbaijan.

This report analyzed potential governmental responses to the problem of how to boost museum attendance in post-COVID-19 Azerbaijan. Their utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) resources across the country was the primary subject of this article. The feasibility of the study objectives was evaluated using a policy matrix approach which combines the policy alternatives that are discussed analyzed and argued to bring about the solutions to the problems in under policy scrutiny. The biggest obstacle to overcome during the research was deciding which models would be the most productive and efficient. The study, thus, drew on information gathered through a variety of quantitative and qualitative techniques. The data acquired is compared to other data for analysis. Quantitative information was gathered through surveys and traditional sources like academic publications. The survey was prepared using Google Forms and distributed online to receive the benefits of a non-probability sampling which sought to avoid high costs as well as times lost to the data collection. Even though this method is usually considered a relatively slow method for performing scientifically valid research, for our cases, we had limited number of answers possible for identifying the factors affecting our policy problem. Thus, we used exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling method, which involved participants providing multiple referrals and by direct contacting via social networks. We have collected responses from 140 participants, who shared with us their demographic information and we tried not to focus on specific groups of people to be able to garner as much diversity as possible in our responses. In addition, the survey inquired as to the level of museum enthusiasm among Baku locals. One may use these to learn how many people visit the museum, what information was provided to them, what variables lead to businesses experiencing a pandemic, and what strategies museums can employ to maintain progress during times of crisis. In order to ensure the neutrality of the data, the respondents' confidential information does not appear anywhere in the survey.

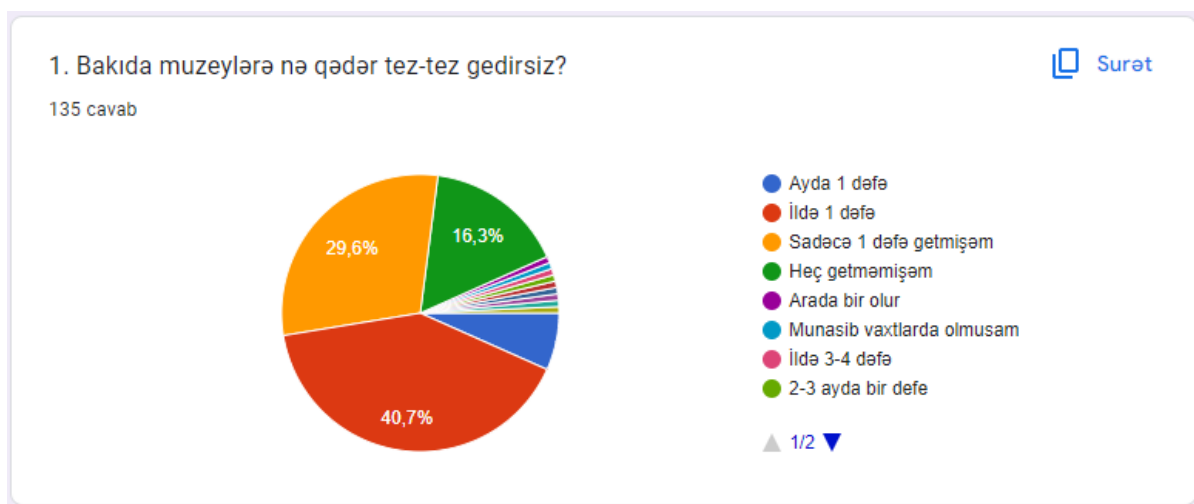
The policy paper consists of 5 chapters. The first chapter features the introduction and methodology of the intended study on the increasing museum attendance. Second chapter will feature problem description, discussing the challenges faced by museums in Azerbaijan in terms of low attendance and lack of interest in history and culture. Third chapter will offer policy alternatives, followed by the fourth which will evaluate the policy alternatives against the criteria and thus, creating a matrix. In Chapter 5, the study will provide the relevant conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2. Problem Description

The maintenance and development of the region's cultural heritage are directly affected by the declining number of museum visitors, which has become a major issue for many cultures in recent years. For people to learn about a community's history, traditions, and values, museums serve a basic role in conserving and developing its cultural heritage. Museums are important because they are “active in shaping knowledge, using their collections, they put together visual cultural narratives which produce views of the past and thus of the present” (E. Hooper-Greenhill, 2007:2). Low visitor statistics are not a contemporary phenomenon for the museum sector. In the past, museums have had trouble bringing more people because of a number of problems, such as location, entry costs, and ease of access. Unfortunately, in contemporary society, museums again fail to bring enough visitors to their displays, risking their long-term sustainability and cultural heritage. Visitors are really the museums' primary revenue generators and the justification for their continued existence. Without a regular supply of visitors, museums may even be pushed to decrease their hours, modify their exhibition programs, or even completely cease operations. This would limit the community's knowledge and appreciation of its past by preventing access to irreplaceable cultural symbols and information. Declining museum attendance poses a threat to the future of cultural institutions too. (Margaret Middleton, 2017).

Whilst researching this hot concern, it became clear that this is not only related to one or two particular nations, this is a worldwide phenomenon and most countries, not only developing but also developed countries struggled and even continue to struggle today as well. A report from the American Alliance of Museums claims that recent years have seen a drop in visitors to museums in the United States. According to the report, "museums are facing a challenge in attracting visitors due to a lack of awareness about the value and relevance of museums in today's society" (American Alliance of Museums' report "TrendsWatch 2017 p13).

The Republic of Azerbaijan is also struggling with this pressing issue, as do many other nations. By highlighting the cultural heritage of the region, it should be mentioned that the economy of the country also has an important role in this subject. Also, the shortage of visitors to Baku's museums may result in a detrimental impact on the economy. In addition to bringing in people from all over the world, museums also support local businesses by generating revenue. A drop in museum visitors could have a ripple effect on the neighborhood's economy and the lifestyles of residents who depend on tourism. Besides this, according to the our primary data collected through surveys by us, 29.6% of respondents went to museums once for a lifetime, 16.3% never went to museums, which is also a good indicator of the shortage of visitors and worth to research about this problem.



In conclusion, Baku's under-visited museums are a significant issue that directly threatens both the region's economic progress and attempts to protect and enhance its rich cultural heritage. For the community to keep benefiting from and understand its rich history and culture, it is vital that this issue been addressed. Due to the urgency and importance of the subject, this chapter will examine the most common reasons of museum visitors declining trend, including lack of awareness, limited accessibility, and disinterest in history and culture as well as it will underline which policy options have been implemented till now in Azerbaijan to address the problem and their status and whether they have been effective or not.

2.1 Lack of interest in local history and culture

The general public's lack of interest in history and culture is another element that leads to poor enrollment at museums. From the survey results that were collected by us, it became visible that 42.5% people state that they have no interest in history and culture and that's why they do not visit the museums. Also, it can be easily observed from the survey results that 27.6 % of people and 41.8% people think that one of the main advantages of going to museums is to learn about history and culture.



As interest to history and culture declines, the percentage of people who visit museums decreases simultaneously. A study published in the International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research found that many young people in Azerbaijan have a limited knowledge of their own cultural heritage, and that this lack of knowledge is contributing to a decline in interest in traditional cultural practices and

historical sites (Abasova & Musayev, 2020). Also, according to the statistics of visitors between 2014-2023, collected by Independence Museum (İstiqlal Muzeyi), it is also visible that year by year the number of people aged 17-25 that visited museums declined. Whilst in 2016, 905 people visited this museum, in 2023 it decreased to 231. (Independence Museum statistics 2014-2023)

2016-ci il üzrə

№	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikası
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	1707
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	905
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	47
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	862
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	458
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	734

2023-cü il üzrə(01.01.2023-01.03.2023)

№	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikası
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	611
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	231
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	15
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	72
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	100
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	811

This lack of interest in history and society is the result of an array of factors. The fast modernization and development that Azerbaijan has witnessed in recent years is one of the leading causes. Many people are more and more keen on the present and future than the past as the country has become more industrialized and developed. As a consequence, individuals are less and less keen on ancient places and traditional cultural practices. An article published in The Diplomat notes that “Azerbaijan has undergone rapid modernization in recent years, which has led to a decline in interest in traditional cultural practices and historical sites”(Shirinov, 2019). According to the report, many young people in Azerbaijan have

become less interested in their own cultures and traditions and much more interested in Western cultural practices and trends. Thereby, the influence of Western culture is also another element that has contributed to this lack of interest. Numerous Azerbaijanis have developed a greater interest in Western cultural practices as the country has developed more integrated with the global world, disregarding their own traditions and cultural heritage in the process. This has led to a drop in interest in historical sites and museums as well as a decline in the attractiveness of traditional Azerbaijani cultural events and practices.

Besides that, Azerbaijan's educational system places too little emphasis on its past and culture. Despite some attempts to improve both cultural and historical education, many schools continue to place more emphasis on math and science than history and culture. Some experts contend that the system places totally inadequate emphasis on the humanities and social sciences and rather than places an excessive emphasis on academic works and technical skills. As a response, many young people do not have a deep sense of ownership in their own history and culture as they grow up. Due to the lack of emphasis placed on cultural heritage and history, young people may not grow to understand or be engaged in these subjects. Instead, they might place more importance on skills and expertise that they believe are more applicable to their future careers. Furthermore, as young generation are more inclined to technological professions which are considered the professions of future, the ones that is related with history and culture are underestimated as time goes on. It is undeniable that, as in many other countries, technological jobs are growing in popularity among the youth population in Azerbaijan. This is in part the consequence of a rise in demand for specialists in fields like computer science, engineering, and data analytics brought on by the worldwide trend towards digitization and automation. This trend has, however, also had an impact on the way individuals view careers in history and society. These occupations might be perceived by many young people in Azerbaijan as less important or profitable than those in the tech sector. However, jobs in areas like archaeology, history, and cultural preservation can also provide satisfying and meaningful work as well as possibilities for both personal and professional development. Consequently, modernization, development,

urbanization, and a greater tendency toward Western values and norms constitute a number of major causes of a lack of interest in history and culture.

Now, it is essential to take a look at the policy alternatives that have been put into effect so far in order to understand which policies have been implemented correctly in Azerbaijan and which have been done incorrectly, as well as to evaluate the consequences of those policies. The following policies have been part of them:

Public-private partnerships: Some PPPs with the intention of encouraging interest in history and culture have been formed in Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, public-private partnerships (PPPs) have served as a policy option to stimulate interest in history and culture and raise museum participation. PPPs involve coordination between the government and businesses or people in the private sector with the aim of achieving a particular goal. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation in Azerbaijan is an example of a private sector company that has engaged with museums and other cultural organizations to finance exhibits and other events. In Azerbaijan, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation has contributed to a number of cultural projects, such as the protection of historical sites, the financing of art museums, and the assistance of educational initiatives focused on history and culture. The Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, which has a museum devoted to his life and career, is one of the new institutions that the Foundation has funded. PPPs have the capacity to function as a successful tool for encouraging interest in Azerbaijan's history and culture. The government can access more funding and resources to promote the development of museums and cultural projects by collaborating with private sector groups. By highlighting the contributions made by private sector organizations to these initiatives, PPPs can also assist in boosting public knowledge of the significance of history and culture. It may be necessary to establish specific guidelines for PPP partnerships that ensure transparency, accountability, and a focus on the interests of the public in maximizing the potential advantages of PPPs in promoting interest in Azerbaijan's history and culture. It would lower possible hazards while maintaining PPPs as a significant policy option for fostering an interest in Azerbaijani history and culture.

Investment in museum infrastructure; Investment in museum infrastructure has been a policy option used in Azerbaijan to foster involvement in history and culture and enhance the number of visitors to museums. The government of Azerbaijan has lately made investments in the construction of new institutions and the restoration of older ones. Modern facilities were designed to be provided in order to attract visitors and expand their total museum experience. The National Museum of History of Azerbaijan is one example of a museum in that region that has experienced remodeling. In 2017, the museum experienced a significant renovation that included the introduction of fresh lighting, multimedia exhibits, and interactive features. The renovation of the museum was aimed at offering visitors a more interesting and educational experience, highlighting the lengthy history of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani government has made investments in new museum construction in addition to restorations. As an example, the Baku Museum of Modern Art, which initially opened in 2009, has a portfolio of modern art from Azerbaijan and other nations.

Investment in museum infrastructure has the potential to be an effective tool for stimulating Azerbaijani interest in its past and culture. Modern infrastructure and interactive exhibits can help museums bring more visitors and establish a more enjoyable experience that fosters a greater understanding of the nation's cultural heritage. Additionally, funding for new museums can help to increase the variety of cultural materials that are available for everyone to see and open up new possibilities for exploration. However, it is essential to guarantee that investments in museum infrastructure are made in a sustainable manner that is sensitive to the demands and requirements of the general public. This could entail investing money in the areas that are most prone to attracting visitors after conducting research to find the exhibits and facilities that fit those criteria. In order to keep existing museums interesting and relevant to visitors over time, it may also require ongoing maintenance and restorations. It may be essential to develop exact investment guidelines that put sustainability and public involvement first in maximizing the potential advantages of investment in museum infrastructure in fostering interest in history and culture in Azerbaijan. By doing this,

funding in museum infrastructure could remain a crucial policy option for fostering Azerbaijani interest in history and culture.

In recent years, the Azerbaijani government has attempted to enhance the educational system and resolve the under-emphasis on history and culture. A new state education program was adopted by the government in 2013 with an emphasis on developing a more detailed and well-rounded curriculum. The program was aimed at improving both the quality and accessibility of education across the country while also fostering a better understanding of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage and history. The government has issued new textbooks and teaching materials as part of these changes, emphasizing the value of history and culture. Azerbaijani literature, music, art, and architecture, as well as the country's rich and diverse cultural traditions, have all been added to the curriculum. Despite these initiatives, the reforms have been slow to take effect, and much more work needs to be done to improve the standards and quality of education in Azerbaijan. In order to completely realize the potential of the educational system to encourage a greater appreciation of history and culture, a number of issues must be resolved.

Reforms were adopted with regard to the status and effects of policy alternatives, but they did not significantly change the sectors of museums. Lack of emphasis on education is one potential concern with the chosen policy alternatives. The development of historical and cultural education in schools has been given less focus than efforts to encourage cultural tourism and invest in museum infrastructure. Young people in particular, who might not have a strong knowledge or appreciation of their own cultural heritage, may be less interested as a result of this. Lack of marketing and promotion of cultural institutions is another possible problem. The government has made investments in the building of new museums and the renovation of old ones, but less attention has been paid to attracting new visitors to these locations. This could indicate that many people are unaware of the museums and cultural destinations nearby or are unaware of their historical importance. In order to increase visitor numbers to museums in Azerbaijan, it may be necessary to take a more comprehensive approach that includes investment in education, marketing and

promotion of museums, and continued development of cultural tourism initiatives. It may be possible to increase interest in history and culture among the population and draw more visitors to Azerbaijan's museums by concentrating on enhancing historical and cultural education in schools, promoting museums and cultural sites through targeted marketing campaigns, and continuing to invest in the development of cultural tourism initiatives.

2.2 Limited digital accessibility of museums

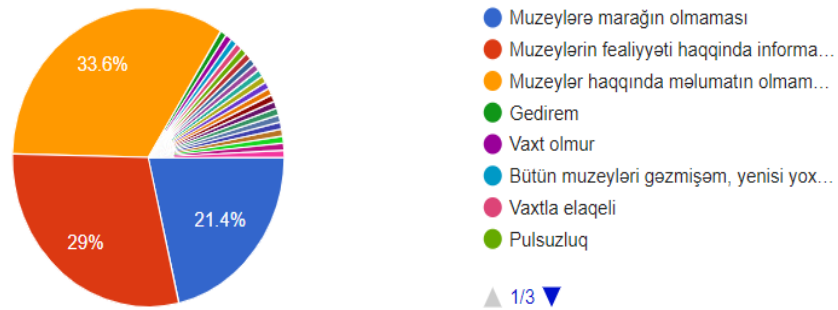
Though accessibility for museums has been an issue for many years (Molloy 1981), with the increasing use of technology—especially via the Web, and now through mobile access— technological barriers have become as important as physical barriers (Lisney et al., 2013d) Accessibility, in museums, has several different aspects making it more insidious than someone can think. This happens as museums are not always freely accessible, but they have several, different hindrances and barriers, physical or not, limiting their real inclusiveness (Ludovico Solima, University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”).

Sharafat Mammadova, director of the scientific exposition division, in her interview in 2010, noted: “It cannot be argued that there are no visitors to the Azerbaijan independence Museum, but a small number of them concerns me personally”. The Azerbaijan state Theater Museum director, Nurida Nurullayeva, also expressed some interest in this matter in 2010. According to her, the museum received nearly between 15 and 20 daily visitors at that time. Even though she was aware that the indicator was not so high, she found it to be satisfactory (Sadiyev, 2014b). This demonstrates that some museums in Baku receive more visitors than others.

2. Bakıda muzeyə tez-tez getmirsinizsə, bunun səbəbləri nədir?



131 responses



The survey results that were conducted for our research revealed that the inability to purchase museum tickets in Baku and the limited accessibility of information about museums' activities are the second key issue that influences many people who want to visit the museums and galleries. When we try to identify the primary cause of this it becomes apparent that the issue is the uneven distribution of resources among the museums. Some museums are endowed with all the necessary modern facilities while the rest, for example, the Azerbaijan State Museum of Agriculture, the Azerbaijan Museum of Geology, and the Museum of Natural History named after Hasan Bey Zardabi, do not have available online websites and computer-based systems, the equipment or infrastructure to support electronic payment methods or online ticket sales. Like numerous cities worldwide, Baku struggles with inadequate payment systems, weak and restricted internet connection. During Covid 19 due to the absence of modern technologies, some of museums could not operate fully. This prevented the museum staff and visitors from participating in virtual trainings and workshops (Rufat Khaslarov (<http://rkhaslarov.github.io>), n.d.).

The Palace of Shirvanshahs, Azerbaijan State Museum of History, Azerbaijani National Carpet Museum, and a few more museums are among those that are accessible online and more preferred by locals and tourists, while the others remain negligent and unknown (Sadiyev, 2014b). For these reasons, most tourists, especially the ones with disabilities or the ones that have trouble using the internet, find it difficult to buy tickets for these museums as there are few options for buying tickets in person, and online platforms

for selling tickets don't function properly in many cases. The limited accessibility provides obstacles for visitors and citizens, who desire to explore the cultural heritage of our country and learn about its history and art. Visitors occasionally are not aware of all the different purchase choices accessible to them which also impacts the visitor number. So, to increase the number of visitors museums must consider these aspects and discover strategies to make ticket purchases more convenient.

In addition to examining the root causes of the problem, it is essential to consider the policy solutions that were implemented to address the issue's past and present status. Government organizations had periodically put into effect a few policy alternatives in an effort to increase public access to museums and reduce their limited accessibility. The President issued directives on March 6, 2007 "on the improvement of museum work in Azerbaijan", and on May 22, 2009 "The special event plans on overhauling of the museums operating in the regions of Azerbaijan according to the modern standards and providing with the new equipment and necessary exhibits." The fundamental goal of these instructions was to develop museums in order for them to reach new standards, which would then draw attention and increase the number of visitors (Discover Museum World of Azerbaijan, n.d.). Starting in 2016 an online ticket-purchasing platform named Iticket.az began operating in Azerbaijan. This is an online platform that provides numerous services linked to ticket sales for different events like concerts, plays, shows, and exhibitions in museums and galleries. Users can browse for museums, examine ticket pricing and accessibility, and buy their tickets online due to the website's user-friendly layout. Moreover, due to the sophistication of the public and the impact of technology on our daily lives, the time has become the most valued resource for everyone, regardless of age, income, position, and other characteristics (Gheorghilaş, 2017). In addition, for those who don't have time to purchase tickets in person this online system is a perfect way to get aware of existing exhibits and events and visit museums without waiting in lines. iTicket.az allows users to purchase tickets straight from the website with a number of payment options notably cash on delivery, debit or credit cards, and phone banking. Furthermore, this online platform offers comprehensive data about museums and

their contact details making it easier for guests to arrange the excursions appropriately. The platform is also very active on social networks. Here iTicket.az frequently distributes its posts on various events, grabbing the attention of a large mass (iTicket.AZ — Biletlərin Onlayn Satışı, n.d.).

Later, for further development of online platforms and putting more of an emphasis on museums it was decided to develop an online platform that solely enhances museum activities. By the initiative of the Ministry of Culture, in 2023 there was created a website named museum.az. This internet resource offers a list of museums that are located throughout the country and gives details about the museums' addresses, operating hours, entrance charges, and other relevant information. The website also provides the latest information about cultural activities and exhibits that take place in Azerbaijan. Museum.az is available in 3 languages: Azerbaijani Russian and English, which makes it easier for foreign users. The other unique part of the platform is that it allows virtual tours of museums. It is a great opportunity for those who are not able to visit museums in life, including those who live in rural places or the ones with physical limitations. Also, it can boost the curiosity of many people after taking a virtual museum tour to see the exponents in the real life. In addition, museum.az offers academic tools like learning activities and engaging tasks to make museums increasingly attractive and accessible to students of different ages (Museums, n.d.). This initiative aims to raise interest in the art and culture of the country and to instill a greater love of museums in the next generation.

Implementation of these policy solutions had a positive impact on making the museums more accessible to visitors but overall did not solve the root of the problem. By collaborating with iTicket.az, several museums in Baku were able to increase their visitor numbers and, in some ways, raise their visibility to the public. Through using social media platforms and the website iTicket.az was able to spread knowledge about the events and exhibitions that were taking place in museums and galleries and encourage more people to participate. However, this policy alternative couldn't be used to its full potential due to incompatibility with technology. To interact with the services delivered by iTicket.az, the museums needed particular

hardware or software systems. Only a few museums were presented on this site since the rest of them were not equipped with proper electronic systems. This aspect made it difficult for museum visitors to reach other institutions. Furthermore, the website gives fundamental information about museums and not providing the whole schedule of events and exhibitions that take place in museums and galleries, which restricts the visitor's awareness and interaction with the museums.

The second implemented policy solution, a new webpage museum.az, also, does not fully meet the requirements. It is not fully established yet and still faces challenges. Although it is a great initiative for assisting tourists in learning more about museums and locating necessary information, users cannot purchase tickets online. There is a section on the website "buy ticket" that never offers a service when the user clicks on it. It takes the users to the default page. Secondly, several museums are not listed on the webpage and the information about upcoming events in museums and galleries is not updated. Moreover, the webpage experiences technical challenges like system failures, delays in page loading, and software configuration issues. As a result, users find it challenging to get details about exhibitions and activities in museums and galleries, purchase tickets online, and get discouraged to use the platform.

Digital accessibility needs to be inclusive so that a piece of work can reach as wide an audience as possible (Lisney et al., 2013). For continuing development, upkeep, and promotion of digital services, the essential factor is financing. Unfortunately, financing for these initiatives is considered scarce, particularly for smaller institutions with restricted resources. Consequently, these conditions make it difficult to enact policies that will increase the accessibility and attractiveness of museums to visitors.

2.3. Lack of awareness on exhibitions and activities

Lack of awareness among people is one of the leading causes of this particular problem- lack of visitors in Baku's museum sector. Lack of awareness mainly derive from lack of effective marketing and promotion, language barriers, limited availability of information about these institutions. Because to their

restricted marketing budgets or a lack of marketing expertise, many Baku museums struggle to attract visitors. Despite having a rich cultural heritage, many museums in Baku fail to attract visitors because of limited advertising and promotional efforts. As a result, potential guests of museums are often not aware of the exhibitions and activities that these museums host, leading to an adverse impact on the number of visitors. According to a report from the Azerbaijan State Tourism Agency from 2020 "despite the rich cultural heritage, Azerbaijani museums remain one of the least visited sites in the country due to poor marketing and a lack of awareness among tourists". (Azerbaijan Tourism Market Research Report 2019)

It should also be noted that, the majority of those surveyed mentioned a lack of awareness as one of the primary reasons they didn't visit museums, which underlines the problem's existing scope and intensity and demonstrates that attempts at tackling it have so far been ineffective.

Additionally, language barriers can also add to a lack of awareness since so many museums only share info in Russian or Azerbaijani, creating challenges for visitors from other countries to get acquainted with the exhibits. The language problem creates difficulties for tourists in studying the exhibits and reduces the attractiveness of museums in Azerbaijan" (Aliyeva, N. (2019, October 24). Apart from these dominant languages (Azerbaijani and Russian), limited multilingual resources (lack of materials in foreign languages), translation challenges, limited language skills of museum staff (some of the team members of museums are still failing to introduce information in English when there were some requests by visitors) are also main challenges that lead to limited availability of information that distract foreigners to come and visit, or once they visit one of the museums, they distract from visiting the other one because of aforementioned reasons. In conclusion, the low number of visitors to Baku's museums is largely due to an absence of awareness. Overall, a lack of awareness is a significant factor that needs to be dealt with in order to boost visitor numbers and encourage the cultural heritage of Baku.

In addition to identifying the root causes of the issue, it is essential to examine the policy mechanisms that have been adopted in response to the issue's past and present status, as well as whether or not those

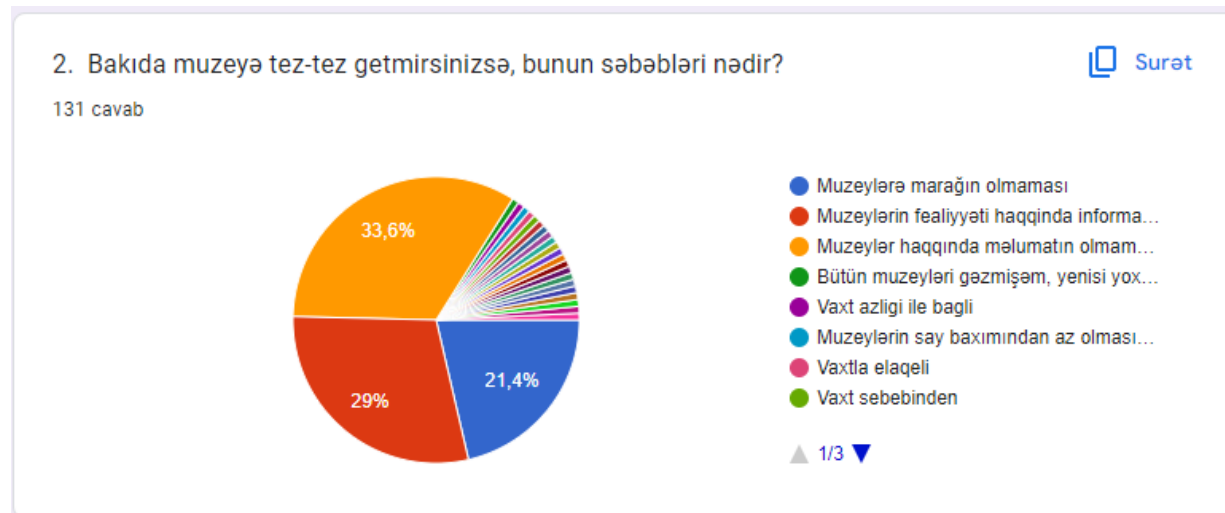
alternatives have been effective in increasing the number of visitors to museums. Amongst some of the remarkable policy tools are:

Government funding: The Azerbaijani government has set aside funds to encourage museums in Baku, especially those that are experiencing financial difficulties. This policy mechanism seeks to maintain the ability of museums to function and offer visitors experiences and exhibits. One such government fund is invested in the development of the Baku Museum Pass, which provides guests discounted entry to six museums in Baku. By reducing the cost for tourists and locals to visit numerous museums, this pass intends to increase the number of visitors to museums. (State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2021)

Cultural programs: Azerbaijan's government has also implemented a variety of cultural efforts intended to promote cultural heritage and spread awareness of Baku museums. Festivals, concerts, and other cultural events are a part of these initiatives, which intend to draw people to the museums and boost their visibility. Another initiative aims to increase accessibility of museums for visitors who are unable to visit in person because of geographic, financial, or other constraints by providing digital tours for some museums in Baku. (State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Culture and Arts)

Digitalization: To display their exhibits and events, many museums in Baku have adopted digitalization and instituted various online platforms, like websites and social media accounts. (British Council Azerbaijan 2020). The purpose of this policy mechanism is to extend the attractiveness of museums and raise public awareness of them. However, the effectiveness of these policy mechanisms in addressing the issue of a lack of visitors to museums in Baku is not clear. Although the Baku Museum Pass and virtual tours may strengthen the public's awareness and accessibility of museums, it is not clear how many individuals are aware of these programs or whether they have been effective in bringing in more visitors. It should be noted that this problem still remains outgoing, and the initiatives targeted to deal with them still remain weak as there are still concerns with insufficient marketing and promotion, a lack of awareness about museums, and language barriers that make museums inaccessible to visitors from other countries. It can be easily observed

from the below given survey result, 33.6% of respondents claim that they are no aware of the activities of museums.



Chapter 3 Policy Alternatives

In this chapter, we explore policy alternatives aimed at addressing the underlying problems that hinder museum attendance in Azerbaijan. By identifying and addressing these challenges, we can develop innovative approaches to enhance interest, accessibility, and awareness of history and culture. Three key policy solutions will be presented, each targeting a specific problem. These policy alternatives have been carefully designed to leverage the potential of technology, social media engagement, and interactive museum experiences. By implementing these strategies, we can foster a vibrant cultural environment that attracts and engages visitors.

3.1 Increasing the number of thematic and interactive museums and/or exhibitions

Museums play a vital role in preserving Azerbaijan's history and culture, but they have a reputation for being stuffy and uninteresting, especially among the country's youth. There are a variety of reasons why museums may be perceived as uninteresting, and as we have discussed, a lack of interest in history and

culture among young people is recognized as a major problem. A common complaint is that there is simply too much going on to know where to begin admiring them or what to focus on initially. The fact that many museums still utilize antiquated methods and exhibits may also contribute to this. They tend to be heavy on the teaching, with plenty of boring text and screen time. Even though many people find museums dull, they still visit for a variety of reasons. Some people visit museums out of simple interest; others out of a sense of duty or obligation; and still others for no other reason than that they find the wealth of information and artifacts on display to be intriguing.

There is a growing interest among educators and museums in incorporating digital solutions into visitors' museum experiences. There is significant room for edtech creativity in Azerbaijani museums thanks to immersive technologies like augmented reality and virtual reality, which allow people to encounter digitally produced information in both physical and virtual settings. For numerous museums, the usage of augmented reality might be helpful in getting their ideas over to today's young people by providing them with a more personalized and immersive museum experience. By combining compelling narratives with innovative augmented reality (AR) experiences, more people may benefit from shared information (Boboc, Băutu, Gîrbacia, Popovici, & Popovici, 2022). Museums, for instance, may include a wide variety of AR elements into their projects, each tailored to the institution's goal for a certain tour, exhibition, or theme. Furthermore, the augmented content can be presented in a variety of formats, including video, 3D augmentations, audio, text, and more (Kohles, 2021). People are more engaged and motivated to learn informally about topics and subthemes when they are presented with fascinating facts using AR. Using augmented reality, today's youth are being enticed to take an active role in their education. By scanning targets and places, museumgoers may learn about complicated relationships and processes, piece together the past, imagine the future, engage with augmented realities, and discuss what they've learned with others. Augmented reality can also alter this immobile quality. Museums may enrich visitors' experiences with artwork and objects by adding and overlaying digital enhancements over a point of interest. By displaying

it from a new and broader angle, augmented reality (AR) features at museums may bring to life works of art, scientific concepts, architectural details, and other components we sometimes overlook. The potential for augmented reality games to revolutionize family museum visits is huge. Incorporating lighthearted augmented reality (AR) features into family-friendly games allows groups to explore a city, garden, museum, or other environment while playing and learning together.

Several museums, like the Louvre Museum in Paris and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. utilize interactive methods like Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) to grant visitors an opportunity to experience virtual environments, explore ancient artifacts, interact with virtual creatures, talk to the interactive guides as well as have virtual experiences related to the museum's collections (The Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building, 2022).

3.2 Creating and implementing digital platforms or applications

Digitalization is the process through which a museum creates digital representations of its collections for online display. The subject of how to expand the museum's online offerings beyond their websites and publicly available databases has lately gained traction considering the growing number of digitally preserved items. The consequences of digitalization are producing a novel approach to experiencing any museum, one that may even be preferable than visiting the place in person. Digitizing a collection can be done in several different ways. Scanning the original artwork is all that's needed to digitally preserve flat prints and paintings. Museums have also started using 3-D reproductions of genuine sculpture to capture every aspect of detail. Due to their reliance on tourism, Azerbaijan's local museums face difficulties when visitor numbers drop, as they did during the COVID-19 period (Rais, 2013). This places a strain on the government's resources and prevents it from investing in other priorities.

The academic advantages are only one of many that will accrue from digitizing their whole collections. Thanks to recent developments in 3D computational geometry, we can now virtually reconstruct

3D models of real-world objects from collections of photographs. As the terrain is digitally mapped, potential connections can be found by comparing the peaks and valleys of one piece to their corresponding features on another. Using this method, Woolley, Gehlken, Ch'ng, and Collins (2018) were able to effectively automate the reassembling of ancient Uruk city blocks and the same could potentially be done for the artifacts linking several historical events of Azerbaijani history. Accessibility is another advantage of digitizing art, as many art enthusiasts lack the financial resources to go to far-flung locations in search of the most famous paintings and sculptures in the world. More people, both locally and internationally, would be able to view high-quality reproductions of the original works of art that are preserved and shown in Azerbaijani museums thanks to technological advancements. It is possible that seeing these works online is preferable to going to the museum, what with the crowds and the difficulty of reading the limited information supplied there. An online database not only provides an unobstructed view of the artwork, but also allows users to contribute multimedia information about the work, the artist, and so on.

Virtual museums are one type of digital museum idea with the goal of facilitating access, context, and outreach via the use of IT (Schweibenz, 1998). Virtual museums have come a long way in the previous decade, from simple online replicas to elaborate communication systems deeply intertwined with stories in 3D rebuilt situations (Ferdani, Pagano, & Farouk, 2013). This development has resulted in several virtual museum instantiations brought to the visitors by a diverse array of platforms and technologies, all with the intention of visually elucidating historical events, architectural designs, or artistic creations. Museums are increasingly investing in interactive exhibits that can help visitors in sensing the atmosphere around the visit to the same museum without physically attending it (Partarakis et al., 2017). Web-delivered virtual museums deliver content via the Web and are made possible by the proliferation of different 3D viewers that aim to provide 3D interactive applications that can be embedded in browsers. Many modern virtual museums make use of 3D models to recreate monuments, sites, landscapes, etc., which visitors can then explore in real time, either independently or with the help of a guide (Forte & Siliotti, 1997).

For one, Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has integrated digital technologies into visitor management. Their philosophy is also built on the idea that by embracing, rather than avoiding from the application of digital innovations, can they attract more people into seeing what their museum has to offer. Their solutions include a mobile app with built-in customizable (based on what the individual preference of a visitor is) self-guided tours, interactive maps, and additional information about artworks. (Heyman, 2015).

3.3 Increasing social media engagement

In addition to establishing a unique identity for each museum department inside an institution, social media disrupts the usual flow of information within and outside our organizations (Gates, 2012). While previously museums' marketing and PR departments controlled how the public perceived them, the rise of social media has given visitors unprecedented access to the institution's many faces. By using social media, museums can keep their audiences up to date on their agenda and allow participants to witness the process, without necessarily expecting the renovation happening, so they don't lose their attention before the exhibits are ready for viewing. Museums have had to learn to interact with the public in a succinct manner due to time limits and attention competition so that they may make the most of possibilities to catch attention and be effective in their communication. Because a well-produced video or striking image can convey just as much information as a well-written article, many organizations are shifting their focus to platforms that emphasize visuals.

Azerbaijan's museums may reach out to current and future visitors and draw attention to their collections, exhibits, and activities by making significant use of social media to combat the problem of low attendance. Museums, in keeping with the times, may now provide potential visitors videos of exhibition designers plotting the early phases of a new display or interviews with educators and curators on certain themes. Due to the fact that audiences' primary motivation is not the final product but rather the process by which it was created (Giridharadas, 2014), many experts believe that sharing internal museum processes with the public is the driving force behind online public engagement. To better engage the audience, social

media like Facebook combine the advantages of both short and lengthy forms of communication. To better understand their patrons, Azerbaijan's museums can use Facebook (Liew, 2014). Facebook makes it simple for museums to publish updates that appear in the news feeds of their followers, to build picture albums to showcase their collections and to tag people who have attended events, and to publish films or blog posts that can be commented on and shared by the public. While this may not be the most scientific method, it does allow the institution to get a feel for what kinds of things their Facebook fans are interested in. A museum's success in attracting new visitors through Facebook may be measured by looking at the number of likes and shares its posts receive. In addition, the Facebook page classifies its users according to several characteristics, such as gender and age. The institution benefits greatly from knowing who is and is not likely to visit the museum thanks to this data (Stewart, 2012). Museums have discovered that there is much more they can do with social media than just advertise exhibitions and activities. With the rise of social media and other online tools for communication, many concerns have arisen concerning how organizations may best leverage these tools. Participating in social media allows museums to enter a realm of interactive education and user-generated material, which may be used to collect information on visitors' experiences with museum exhibits, programs, and events (Fox, 2011). Allowing comments on a museum's social media post provides the public a chance to share their thoughts. These are just a few examples, but many museums worldwide recognize the value of using Facebook as a platform for visitor management, engagement, and communication, among them being the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Met, located in New York City, which promotes special exhibitions, and interacts with its audience; and the British Museum in London which actively uses Facebook to communicate with visitors and provide updates on their collections, exhibitions, and educational programs (Gonzalez, 2017).

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined three policy alternatives to address the underlying problems impacting museum attendance in Azerbaijan. By recognizing the lack of interest, accessibility, and awareness as key challenges, we have proposed innovative solutions that capitalize on digital platforms,

social media engagement, and thematic museum experiences. These policy alternatives aim to revitalize the cultural landscape, making history and culture more engaging, accessible, and appealing to a wider audience. However, the successful implementation of these policies relies on collaboration between the Ministry of Culture, museums, technology experts, and stakeholders. Through concerted efforts and a commitment to innovation, we can pave the way for increased museum attendance, cultural appreciation, and a vibrant heritage ecosystem in Azerbaijan.

Chapter 4. Evaluation of Policy Alternatives

In this chapter, we are going to evaluate policy options that were indicated in the previous part. We will analyze each provided option in the terms of following five criteria: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Equity, Feasibility, and Flexibility. After evaluation, one or two most preferred policies will be chosen and the reasons behind this choice will be mentioned.

4.1 Increasing the number of thematic and interactive museums and/or expositions

The first solution that we provided to raise the number of visitors to museums in Baku is increasing the number of thematic and interactive museums and/or expositions. Our survey's results indicate that one factor preventing individuals from visiting museums, as was previously highlighted in Chapter 2, is a lack of interest in culture and history. In an increasingly digital and interactive world, in order to stay relevant museums should meet the conditions of modernity and the latest trends. Thematic and interactive expositions will make the visit to museums more engaging, enjoyable, and memorable. Therefore, this policy solution will be effective in boosting interest in culture and history driving a large number of guests to museums. When we evaluate the policy from the efficiency point it becomes clear that implementing this solution can be costly to the government and museums. The process of developing new thematic and interactive museums and exhibits can be time-consuming, expensive, and difficult. In order to make a proper cost-benefit analysis numerous elements needed to be taken into account, including the target audience,

resources, and budget. Additionally, it will also cost money to provide repairs and routine maintenance for the technology used in interactive museums. As a result the government will have to spend more resources to get the desired number of visitors, which will not satisfy the efficiency criteria. The policy alternative cannot entirely satisfy the equity approach either. The entrance tickets to thematic and interactive museums in a practice are expensive and in most cases are not affordable for all visitors. For example, in Heydar Aliyev Center, the most recently constructed museum complex in Baku, the cost of an entrance ticket is 15 azn for ordinary visitors which is quite expensive for most of the population. There are also discount tickets for people with disabilities, students, and veterans, but still, those tickets are not financially affordable for a majority of visitors. While developing interactive museums can increase interest in culture and history, it is very important to design exhibitions that are reasonable and accessible for all visitors and to make sure that cost is not a barrier to access. As we can conclude from the given example above this solution has been implemented in Azerbaijan. Modern technology and interactive exhibits have been installed at the Heydar Aliyev Center, The Museum of Modern Art, The Maiden Tower, and The Carpet Museum. Those museums are among the ones that are popular and frequently visited in Baku, which indicates that this policy solution is feasible. Coming to flexibility criteria it cannot be said that the policy alternative is very flexible. As we mentioned above interactive museums require significant investments and allocation of resources, such as time, budget, and employee experience. So, changing periodically according to customer needs will be costly and time-consuming. Therefore, the resources and funding of the museum can be a limitation for the flexibility of this policy solution.

After the proposition and evaluation of three different policies, one of them which is increasing social media engagement has been chosen as the best policy alternative to implement in Baku museums for raising the number of visitors. The main reason for that is social media is very popular nowadays, influencing and driving a large number of individuals to follow the new trends of society. With the help of social media, museums can now reach a larger audience than ever before, especially people who may not

have known much about the museums or who do not reside nearby. So, by being active on social media platforms and collaborating with famous influencers and bloggers for promoting exhibitions and cultural events, museums can capture the attention of social media users and increase the number of visitors to the desired level. Challenges like ensuring that the social media content is accessible and inclusive for all visitors, regularly keeping up with new trends, and finding ways to attract influencers and bloggers to collaborate with museums can be solved by finding different methods to reach the public, proposing new strategies for trends, and providing exclusive offerings to influencers and bloggers. Furthermore, based on the assessments above, the chosen policy meets all five requirements, hence there is no reason to hesitate in implementing it.

4.2 Creating and implementing digital platforms or applications

Another policy solution for increasing the number of visitors to museums is creating digital platforms or applications. Digital technologies will provide a more exciting and stimulating experience for all audiences. It would be an effective policy alternative as it would make museums more reachable and accessible to a larger audience by enhancing digital accessibility, offering digital guides or interactive exhibitions, and expanding the availability of online ticket purchasing. Additionally, by using online websites and applications museums will be able to draw people from all over the world and expand their audience. These digital platforms could be developed with assistance from the establishment of a digital hub or innovation center that brings together professionals in technology and museum curating. If it is well-planned and implemented the policy also can be efficient. Creating digital platforms and applications will have some initial costs such as improving the internet system, providing museums with new technologies, and developing new online platforms but as a result, these expenditures will assist museums in adjusting to changing technological trends and addressing contemporary expectations which additionally will make the museums more accessible to society. It would make it easier for visitors and guests to get information about

upcoming events and exhibitions, to take a virtual tour of museums for those who may not have been able to visit museums otherwise, and for those who don't want to waste time buying tickets in person to purchase tickets online. From an equity approach, these steps can provide a great opportunity for people with disabilities and for those who live far away from the center where mainly the museums are located. Visitors' engagement and interest in cultural events may rise as a result of the more accessible and affordable options that digital trips could offer. However, despite the fact that the majority of the population has access to digitalized platforms, there are still some people who cannot afford electronic devices and high-speed internet for getting to online systems. From this perspective, the equity criteria may not be fulfilled entirely for this policy option. Creating digital platforms and applications has been implemented in museums for a few years. Thanks to technological advancements, the development and management of digital platforms have become simpler. There are several examples of online platforms such as ticket.az and museum.az that have been successful in engaging society in museums' experience and making information about museums more available and accessible. So, we can confidently state that Azerbaijan will be able to deploy a variety of innovative digital platforms and apps. As a result, we may infer from the conclusions mentioned above that this policy choice is feasible. Coming to the flexibility criteria we can notice that the policy is quite flexible. With the development of new technologies, shifting visitor needs, and expansion of museum services, digital platforms can be updated and changed periodically. A wide range of users accesses digital platforms and applications since they are frequently made to be user-friendly. It is also possible to adapt digital tools and programs to the unique requirements of various museums and the people that visit them.

Therefore, more visitors will be able to interact with the museum's content and collections due to this design flexibility.

4.3 Increasing social media engagement

Finally, increasing social media engagement will be an effective solution for raising awareness about museums in society. Nowadays, social media has become a huge part of our daily lives. We get information

and news faster and mostly from social media platforms rather than from other sources. By using this policy alternative museums can produce and distribute contents that highlight their programs and collections, reach a bigger audience, and attract and raise the number of visitors. Also, museums may use hashtags to attract a larger audience and provide interesting content, including live streaming, images, and videos, which showcase the museums and their collections. It will help to form an environment for people to interact with one another and exchange their insights, opinions, and ideas, building a sense of community among museum visitors. Secondly, this policy option is efficient from the point of using resources and costs. Using social media platforms is a cost-effective way to promote museums, as it does not require a big budget. Even the smallest museums with limited budgets can produce interesting social media content and attract a large number of followers. By spending a small amount of money for being active on social media, collaborating with influencers and bloggers for promoting museums to their followers, and using social media marketing campaigns government can increase the museums' visitors to a sufficient number. Thirdly, by analyzing the policy from the terms of equity we can indicate that it will be equally accessible to all visitors. It might be also argued that some members of the community, especially the older generation, would be excluded because they do not have access to social media. However, in recent years due to increasing demands for technology and affordable prices for smartphones, it can be said that this problem has completely disappeared. Social media platforms are immensely popular and widely used across the country, and almost everyone has an account on one of them. So, with increased dependence on gadgets and the rapid flow of knowledge, we can indicate that this policy approach will be equally inclusive for all users. Since social media is widely used in the country, increasing social media engagement as a policy solution for raising awareness about museums and attracting more visitors is feasible in Azerbaijan. Some museums, including the Museums of Modern Art and the National Art Museum, are already active on social media and frequently provide updates on the newest activities and exhibitions that are taking place in their museums. iTicket.az the other social media platform, also plays an active role in raising awareness of the local population and

guests about the museum activities. Through this platform, museums advertise future exhibits, events, and special activities as well as take online ticket orders. Finally, the proposed policy option is also flexible. It means that it is adaptable and modifiable to meet the specific requirements of museums and the evolving social media environment. Based on input from their followers, museums can modify their social media efforts. Museums can identify the contexts that gather the greatest interest and adapt the proper strategy.

Policy Options	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Efficiency</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Feasibility</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>
Increasing the number of thematic and interactive museums and/or expositions	✓	×	×	✓	×
Creating and implementing digital platforms or applications	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
Increasing social media engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

To summarize Chapter 3, three policy solutions intended to achieve a wider audience in museums using modern technologies were provided. Those policy options— increasing social media engagement, creating and implementing digital platforms or applications, and increasing the number of thematic and interactive museums and/or expositions – were evaluated through five criteria which are effectiveness, efficiency, equity, feasibility, and flexibility later in Chapter 4. One of the policy alternatives, increasing social media engagement, was chosen as the best option for solving the existing problem in the country. The

primary reason for choosing this policy is that it is the most efficient and effective means of solving the issue. This solution achieves greater results while using fewer resources when compared to the other two policy alternatives. Also, these five criteria are satisfied within this policy option.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Aim of study

The purpose of this capstone project is to eliminate or at least decrease the size of lack of visitors problem in museum sectors- which is among inevitably urgent issues in culture sector. The article analyzes the reasons that led to the problem, measures implemented by local authorities, demonstrates examples of the successful world practices, assesses worldwide policies against five criteria- effectiveness, efficiency, equity, feasibility and flexibility. To begin with, the paper call attention to one of the critical causes of lack of visitors in the museum sector, which is lack of awareness on exhibitions and activities. Second, another cause leading to visitor gap is the limited digital accessibility of museums. The last cause has been detected as disinterest in history and culture amongst the young generation.

Although Azerbaijan tried to propose several policy alternatives to cope with lack of visitors problem in museum sectors- which are investment in museum infrastructure, cultural programs, digitalization, development of Baku Museum Pass and etc., not any improvement have been observed as this issue still remain outgoing or they remained ineffective to bring more visitors as they are not strong or detailed enough. This capstone project has offered different policy alternatives for coping with current obstacles inspiring from world practice, and observing successful policies that have already applied in the worldwide context. Firstly, to address the lack of awareness on exhibitions and activities, it is offered increase social media engagement. Second, to increase the digital accessibility of museums, creating and implementing digital platforms or applications are proposed. Third, increasing the number of thematic and interactive museums

and/or expositions are offered for getting rid of disinterest in history and culture issue and encourage people to be more inclined to them. Therefore, all these policy alternatives are assessed based on already mentioned five criteria to figure out which policy option is more suitable for increasing the visitors in the museums sectors in Azerbaijan. One of the policy alternatives, increasing social media engagement, is ultimately chosen as the most significant and successful way to address the country's current visitors shortage problem in museums sector, after evaluating all policy alternatives. To conclude, the initial goal of the capstone project was to investigate the existing lack of attendees in museum sector in Azerbaijan, examine local policy solutions that have been proposed, present several policy options for current issues based on best practices from around the world, evaluate each policy alternative, and recommend the most successful ones for implementation in Azerbaijan.

Recommendations

1. To create a solid web involvement: it is essential for museums to have an effective online presence in the current digital era. An interactive social media engagement will help the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan to make information about museums more accessible to users. By using social media, museums will be able to promote their events and exhibitions, and attract more visitors. Social media posts and influencers' reviews of museums could motivate followers to participate more fully in museum experiences.
2. Working together with different institutions like schools, universities, and local groups can help museums become more visible, broaden their programming, and make them more well-known and attractive. Special discounts or bonuses can be offered by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan to certain groups for visiting museums. For example, college and school students can receive discounted admission or get bonus points in their courses for attending different events and activities in museums. In addition to creating a list of potential guests, this can motivate students to learn and interact with the exhibits and raise their interest in history and culture. Membership

programs that provide free or discounted entrance and access to special events and exhibits are also a great method to encourage individuals to visit museums more frequently.

3. To improve visitor satisfaction: if the visitors enjoy the visit to the museum, they will be more inclined to revisit it again. Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan can work with museums to create plans and projects that will increase visitor pleasure. The satisfied visitors will also recommend the museums to others and by doing this attract more guests to museums in the future. Improving visitor satisfaction may involve presenting interesting exhibitions, giving guided tours, updating the promotion, and offering a variety of special experiences that are unavailable elsewhere to visitors. Guests who are pleased with their experience may be more inclined to buy museum memberships, items, and tickets to special events. This also may contribute to raising the museum's income, which can then be used to improve the tourist experience and draw in more people.
4. Organizing events in museums can include holding activities such as lectures, performances, or cultural festivities. Azerbaijan State Academy of Art (ASAA), The Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Arts (ASUCA), Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) may organize events and art shops in order to increase visitor interaction with the exhibits and collections of the museum. For instance, a presentation or workshop devoted to a particular exhibit might deepen visitors' understanding of the display and stimulate their interest in the museum's contents. Additionally, a museum might plan several activities focused on a single theme or subject, which might entice people to come back more than once. It can help to support retaining existing visitors while bringing in more new ones.

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Appendix

Survey Questions(ENG):

1. Have you ever visited a museum in Baku?

Yes

No

2. If you have not visited a museum in Azerbaijan, what are the reasons for this?

Lack of interest in history and culture

Lack of accessibility

Lack of knowledge about museums in Azerbaijan

Digər:

3. What are the main benefits of visiting museums, in your opinion?

Learning about history and culture

Appreciating art and other creative works

Enhancing personal knowledge and understanding

Enjoyment and entertainment

Digər:

4. What improvements would encourage you to visit museums more frequently in Azerbaijan?

More engaging exhibits or displays

Better promotion of museums and their collections

Lower admission fees

Increased availability of information and resources

Digər:

5. Would you be interested in attending events or programs at museums, such as lectures, workshops, or concerts?

Yes, I would be interested

No, I would not be interested

It depends on the event/program

6. How do you think museums in Azerbaijan could better engage with the community?

Collaborating with local organizations or schools

Hosting community events or activities

Providing educational resources for children and families

Offering free admission on certain days

Digər:

7. How important is it for museums in Azerbaijan to incorporate technology, such as interactive exhibits or virtual tours?

Very important
Somewhat important
Not very important
Not at all important

8. How important is it for museums in Azerbaijan to collaborate with other cultural organizations or institutions, such as libraries or theaters?

Very important
Somewhat important
Not very important
Not at all important

9. If you believe that museums in Azerbaijan should collaborate with other cultural organizations or institutions, what kinds of partnerships would be most beneficial?

Joint programming or events
Sharing of resources or expertise
Coordinated marketing or promotion
Digər:

10. If you have attended a museum event or exhibit opening in Azerbaijan, what did you enjoy about the experience?

The opportunity to see new exhibits or collections.
The chance to interact with other museum-goers or cultural enthusiasts
The educational or cultural value of the event

Survey Question(AZE)

1. Bakıda muzeylərə nə qədər tez-tez gedirsiniz?

Ayda 1 dəfə
İldə 1 dəfə
Sadəcə 1 dəfə getmişəm
Heç getməmişəm
Digər:

2. Bakıda muzeyə tez-tez getmirsinizsə, bunun səbəbləri nədir?

Muzeylərə marağın olmaması
Muzeylərin fealiyyəti haqqında informasiyanın və bilətin rahat əldə edilməməsi
Muzeylər haqqında məlumatın olmaması
Digər:

3. Sizcə, muzeylərə baş çəkməyin əsas üstünlükləri hansılardır?

Tarixi və mədəniyyəti öyrənmək
İncəsənət və digər yaradıcılıq işlərini qiymətləndirmək
Şəxsi bilik və anlayışın artırılması
Zövq və əyləncə
Yuxarıdakıların hamısı
Digər:

4. Hansı təkmilləşdirmələr sizi Bakıda muzeylərə daha tez-tez baş çəkməyə təşviq edərdi?

Daha cəlbedici eksponatlar və ya nümayişlər
Muzeylərin və onların kolleksiyalarının daha yaxşı təbliği
Aşağı giriş haqları
İnformasiya və resursların əlçatanlığının artması
Digər:

5. Muzeylərdə mühazirələr, seminarlar və ya konsertlər kimi tədbirlər və ya proqramlar təşkil olunsa iştirak etmək istərdinizmi?

Bəli, maraqlanardım
Yox, maraqlanmazdım
Tədbirdən/proqramdan asılıdır

6. Necə düşünürsünüz, Bakıdakı muzeylər ictimaiyyətlə daha yaxşı əlaqə qura bilmək üçün nə etməlidir?

Yerli təşkilatlar və ya məktəblərlə əməkdaşlıq
İcma tədbirlərinə və ya fəaliyyətlərinə ev sahibliyi etmək
Uşaqlar və ailələr üçün təhsil resurslarının təmin edilməsi
Müəyyən günlərdə pulsuz giriş təklif etmək

7. Bakıdakı muzeylər üçün interaktiv eksponatlar və ya virtual turlar kimi texnologiyaların tətbiqi nə dərəcədə vacibdir?

Çox vacib
Bir qədər əhəmiyyətli
Çox vacib deyil
Heç vacib deyil

8. Azərbaycanda muzeylərin kitabxana və ya teatr kimi digər mədəniyyət təşkilatları və ya qurumları ilə əməkdaşlıq etməsi nə dərəcədə vacibdir?

Çox vacib
Bir qədər əhəmiyyətli
Çox vacib deyil
Heç vacib deyil

9. Bakıdakı muzeylərin digər mədəniyyət təşkilatları və ya qurumları ilə əməkdaşlıq etməli olduğuna inanırsınızsa, hansı əməkdaşlıq növləri daha faydalı olar?

Birgə proqramlaşdırma və ya tədbirlər
Resurs və ya təcrübə mübadiləsi
Koordinasiyalı marketinq və ya təşviqat
Digər:

10. Bakıda muzey tədbirində və ya sərginin açılışında iştirak etmisinizsə, bu təcrübədən nə xoşunuza gəlib?

Yeni eksponatları və ya kolleksiyaları görmək imkanı.

Digər muzey ziyarətçiləri və ya mədəniyyət həvəskarları ilə qarşılıqlı əlaqə imkanı

Tədbirin təhsil və ya mədəni dəyəri

Azərbaycan İstiqlal muzeyini 2014-2023-cü illər aralığında ziyarət etmiş qonaqların statistikasını

2014-cü il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikasını
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	710
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	192
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	0
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	30
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	244
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	478

2015-ci il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikasını
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	912
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	548
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	107
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	758
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	239
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	9478

2016-ci il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikasını
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	1707
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	905
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	47
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	862
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	458
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	734

2017-ci il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikasını
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	1297
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	508
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	40
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	1211
5.	Xarici qonaqlar(turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	490

6.	Yerli vətəndaş(25-70 yaş)	676
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2018-ci il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikası
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	1980
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	229
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	7
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	754
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	507
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	861

2019-cu il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikası
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	1526
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	489
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	0
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	690
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	1599
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	1107

2020-ci il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikası
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	779
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	188
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	0
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı) yaş	272
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	140
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	309

2021-ci il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikası
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	315
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	158
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	184
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	274

5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	78
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	357

2022-ci il üzrə

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikası
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	1373
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	910
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	176
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	437
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	495
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	2038

2023-cü il üzrə(01.01.2023-01.03.2023)

No	Kateqoriyalar	Ziyarətçilərin statistikası
1.	Məktəbli (6-17 yaş)	611
2.	Ali təhsilli (17-25 yaş)	231
3.	Şəhid ailələri (müxtəlif yaşlarda)	15
4.	Hərbi qulluqçular (18-25 və yuxarı yaş)	72
5.	Xarici qonaqlar (turist, müxtəlif yaşlarda)	100
6.	Yerli vətəndaş (25-70 yaş)	811