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HOW WELL DO YOUNG ROMANIANS KNOW THEIR COUNTRY? HERITAGE LITERACY, EDUCATION AND DOMESTIC TRAVEL

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Abstract: *Studies on young people and heritage usually measure attitudes rather than actual knowledge. This paper measured the heritage literacy of young Romanians through an image-recognition test. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered in person to 1538 respondents aged 18–35. Respondents were shown photographs of Romanian natural and cultural sites, including UNESCO World Heritage sites, as well as similar-looking foreign sites used to detect guessing. Scores were related to domestic travel experience, sources of knowledge (school, family, social media, television) and socio-demographic profile. Comparison tests and multiple regression examined whether recognition depended more on travel than on schooling and whether natural sites were better recognized than cultural ones. The paper identifies the "invisible" parts of Romania's heritage, with recommendations for history and geography teaching and youth domestic tourism.*

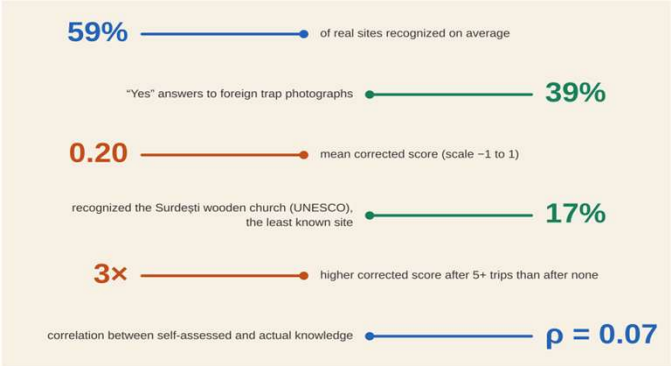
Introduction

Studies on young people and heritage usually measure attitudes rather than actual knowledge, although people often overestimate what they know. This study measured how well young Romanians recognize their country's natural and cultural sites, including UNESCO World Heritage sites, using an image-based test with trap photographs. It examined whether recognition depends more on travel or on schooling and identified the "invisible" parts of Romania's heritage.

Material and method

A paper questionnaire was administered in person to 1538 young people aged 18–35 in Timișoara (May–October 2026). Respondents saw 20 photographs: 16 Romanian sites (8 natural, 8 cultural) and 4 similar-looking foreign "traps." A corrected score subtracted the share of traps "recognized" from the share of real sites recognized.

Results and discussions



Conclusions

Young Romanians recognize only part of their country's heritage: well-known sites are widely identified, whereas several UNESCO monuments remain "invisible." Recognition is associated more closely with personal travel than with schooling or social media, and self-assessment poorly reflects actual knowledge. Targeted promotion of lesser-known sites and better-prepared school trips could reduce this gap.