

PICTURE



Pro-active management
of the Impact of Cultural Tourism
upon Urban Resources and Economies

Case study

Mons

Task n° 3.4

Task Leader:

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in cooperation with the LEMA**

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Case Study: Mons

The field work was done between September and January 2005 by the LEMA team.

The team conducted 2 groups of surveys. In both of them the technique adopted was the direct interview, using a semi-directive questionnaire as a guide.

The sample was of 102 persons.

This study aimed at two main objectives:

- A. Find out the visitors previous knowledge and mental representation of the city they are visiting.**
- B. Detect the relationship between residents and the cities' tangible and non-tangible heritage, in order to know what elements are considered as the most representatives and typical of it.**

Objective A – Visitors' previous knowledge and mental representation of the city,

Survey 4/b, Prototypicality of the offer

Sample: 60 subjects.

Technique: Direct interview, using a semi-directive questionnaire as a guide.

Profile of the sample: This survey was specifically addressed to Tourists

Segments of Age

	Frequency	Percentage
Valid 12 - 18	45	75,0
18 - 29	10	16,7
30 -39	2	3,3
50 - 59	3	5,0
Total	60	100,0

Studies

	Frequency	Percentage
Valid secundarios	54	90,0
superiores	6	10,0
Total	60	100,0

Provenance

	Frequency	Percentage
Valid Belgium	52	86,6
Europeans	6	10
Non Europeans	2	3.4
Total	60	100

Definition of the survey: 5 open and semi-directive questions about the knowledge of the city and the elements that best represent it.

Question 1 Knowledge of tangible and non-tangible Heritage of Mons

This question presented the following list of some of the tangible and non-tangible elements of the city (on basis of what local authorities thought representative): The Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its *Centre d'Art Religieux*,

the *Beffroi*, the *Hotel de Ville* (Municipality), the Fine Arts Museum, the *Mundaneum*, the *Theatre Royal*, the *Carré des Arts*, the *Site des Arbalestriers*, the *Musée Jean Lescarts*, and the *Mons.Expo* and related activities. The subject was asked to tick on any places or events s/he knew in a direct or indirect way. The analysis of the answers shows that, in general, the heritage (both tangible and non-tangible) of the city is quite well-known: in average, each element is familiar (directly or indirectly) to 65% of the sample. The best known elements are the "Mons.Expo and related activities" and the "Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its *Centre d'Art Religieux*" (known respectively by the 91,6% and 90%), followed closely by the "Hotel de Ville" (86%) and the "Beffroi" (85%). On the other hand, there are some elements that are significantly less popular, as the "Musée Jean Lescarts" (known to the 38,%) or the "Mundaneum" and the "Carré des Arts" (known each to 60% of the sample). If we examine the answers more in detail we see that there are some places that are known more in a direct or in an indirect way. The attractors most "directly" or "personally" known are "Mons.Expo and related activities" (73% of the sample knows it because has been there), the "Theatre Royal" (72%) and "Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its *Centre d'Art Religieux*" (70%). Concerning the places known mainly in an indirect way, they are the Fine Arts Museum (47% of the sample knows it only for what they heard about it) and the "Carré d'Arts" (43%).

Question 2 Subjective Heritage valuation

A clear preference emerges from this analysis: the "Mons.Expo and related activities", which is placed in first position by the 35% of the subjects. Other popular elements of Mons are the "Theatre Royal" (in first position for the 21%, and in second position for 15%), and the "Mundaneum" (placed in second position by 13%).

Regarding the reasons associated to the preferences, the most frequent categories are "Interest or love for the theatre" (it represents 23% of all the reasons that appear in this part of the study, and is particularly associated to the "Theatre Royal"), "Interesting" (13%, particularly associated to the "Mundaneum"), "Nice, pleasant" (12%, particularly associated to the "Hotel de ville" and "Beffroi"), "Activities/events/expos/concerts" (12%, particularly associated to the "Mons.Expo and related activities") "and "Amusing" (11%, particularly associated to the "Mons.Expo and related activities" too).

In the case of Mons, the "*Hotel de Ville*" and the "*Theatre Royae*" seem to be the elements of the city richest in meanings for the tourists (both have at least 6 kind of categories associated). From the experience gathered in similar studies, we know that the more categories mentioned in reference to a Heritage element, the highest potential of attracting persons with different interests and profiles. And, on the other hand, the less categories associated, the less chances for the element of becoming a benchmark in the city's cultural offer. On the other hand, we have heritage elements that are associated only to a few categories: for example, the "*Musée Jean Lescarts*", associated only to the "Representative/Symbolic" category, or the "*Carré d'Arts*" and the "*Site des Arbalestriers*", associated each one to just two categories (respectively "Love or interest in theatre" and "Historic/Cultural/Artistic Value"; and "Activities/Events" and "Love or interest in theatre"). Other categories mentioned but not too frequent in this part of the study are "Architectonic value" and the generic category "other".

Question 3: Charming surprises

The city does not seem to hide many surprises for the greatest part of the sample. Only the 5% has been charmed by his/her visit to Mons.

Question 4: Deceiving experiences

Unfortunately, for 10% of the sample there are also some deceiving elements or aspects in the city. These negative aspects are the pollution and the dirtiness of some streets, which together with the lack of adequate lightning in some places can generate a feeling of insecurity.

Question 5: Typical, representative or symbolic elements of Mons.

The first part of this question (what are the elements more representative of Mons) has been answered only by 83% of the sample. Out of this percentage, we can see that the elements mentioned by the visitors are quite scattered. The most mentioned element are the celebrations known as the "*Dou dou*" (considered the most representative element by 44% of the valid percentage of answers, that is without the unanswered questions), followed by the "*Beffroy*" (14%).

Regarding the second part of the question: "what is the second thing most representative of Mons," we have 82% of answers. In first position we find again the "Dou dou", with 16% of the valid percentage of answers), followed this time by the small monkey statue on the "Hotel de Ville" referred to as "Le Singe" (14%), and by the "Saint Waudru" and the "Beffroy" (each mentioned by 10%). Finally, the third part of the question (what is the third thing most typical of the city) has provided 78% of valid answers. The results are surprising this time because we find in first position the "commercial areas" (such as the "Grand Prés"), with 17% of the valid percentage of answers), followed by "Fairs, and entertainment areas (Mons.expo Imagix, foire...)" (13%).

Conclusions

This part of the study offers a very interesting image of Mons from the point of view of the visitors. The fact that the sample is almost completely composed of subjects under 19 years old doesn't allow us to generalise the results. We can say that, at least for the adolescent visitors, on one side, clearly related to school activities, the image of Mons is structured around a remarkable love for theatre and an unusual interest for exhibitions. Looking for a more spontaneous response, we can see how the joyful "Dou dou" celebration represent for almost half of the sample the most representative element of Mons. In second and third place we find elements related to the young age of the subjects, an architectonic-decorative detail such as the "Singe", with its grotesque aspect and appealing tradition, and the entertainment and consumerist activities that more and more represent the context for social interaction for the many European small-cities' young people.

Objective B – Relationship between residents and city’s heritage.

Survey 4/A, Representativeness, Cultural Identity.

Sample: 42 subjects.

Technique: Direct interview, using a semi-directive questionnaire as a guide.

Profile of the sample: This survey was specifically addressed to residents.

Segments of Age

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	12 - 18	31	73,8
	18 - 29	10	23,8
	60 - 69	1	2,4
	Total	42	100,0

Studies

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	High school	41	97,6
	5-year university studies	1	2,4
	Total	42	100,0

Birth place

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Belgium	39	92,9
	Europe	1	2,4
	Rest of the world	2	4,8
	Total	42	100,0

Time residing in Mons

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Less than 1 year	1	2,4
	1 to 5 years	3	7,1
	6 to 15 years	12	28,6
	More than 15 years	26	61,9
	Total	42	100,0

Definition of the survey: 4 open and semi-directive questions about the knowledge, the use and the preferences regarding the elements that constitute the cultural offer of the city.

Question 1: Heritage direct knowledge.

Approximately half of the interviewed subjects have been to or have attended the tangible and non-tangible heritage elements of the city (regrouped in the same list as question 1 of Objective A): in average each element is known by 65% of the residents. This ratio is practically the same (60%) if we consider only the subjects of age comprised between 12 and 18 years old. The best-known elements are the "*Theatre Royal*" (95% of all the complete sample has been there), the "*Mons.Expo and related activities*" (86%), and the "*Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its Centre d'Art Religieux*" (83%). Regarding other elements, the "*Beffroi*" is known to 74% of the sample, the "*Site des Arbalestriers*" to 62%, and the Fine Arts Museum and the "*Mundaneum*" to 55% each one. The most neglected attractors are the "*Carré des Arts*" (only 38% has visited it) and the "*Musée Jean Lescarts*" (10%).

Question 2: Frequentation (Visits in the last year)

As predictable, the frequentation of the Mons' Heritage is more reduced than its levels of knowledge. The most frequented place are the "*Mons.Expo and related activities*" (60% of the residents has been there at least once during the last year) and the "*Theatre Royale*" (57%). The "*Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its Centre d'Art Religieux*", the "*Hotel de Ville*" and the "*Site des Arbalestriers*" have a medium-low frequentation (respectively 38%, 36% and 33%). The less frequented places or events are the "*Beffroi*" (26%), the "*Mundaneum*" (21%), the "*Carré des Arts*" (12%), the Fine Arts Museum (9%) and the "*Musée Jean Lescarts*" (2%).

Regarding the reasons why the subjects have visited these places or events, they are divided into two groups, the first is compulsory (school visits), and represents 18% of the reasons provided by the audience. The second group is related more with the interests of the subjects: the most frequent reasons are related to the attractor's "*Activities/events/expos/concerts*" (this represents the 23% of all the motivations, and is particularly related to the "*Mons.Expo and related activities*", to the "*Mundaneum*" and to the "*Sainte Waudru Cathedral*

and its *Centre d'Art Religieux*"), or to the visitor's "interest/love for the theatre" (17%, obviously related to the "*Theatre Royal*" and "*Site des Arbalestriers*"). Other common motivations are the consideration of the attractor as "nice, pleasant" (11%, quite distributed among all elements but with a higher concentration on the "*Beffroi*", the "*Hotel de Ville*" and the "*Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its Centre d'Art Religieux*"), "Amusing" (10%, exclusively related to the "*Mons.Expo and related activities*") or "Interesting" (5% mainly related to the "*Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its Centre d'Art Religieux*" and the "*Mundaneum*"). Finally, it is interesting to notice how little the categories "Historical/Cultural value" or "Architecture" (2% each) are mentioned, while this is exactly what is brought forward by town officials.

The place associated to more reasons of visit are the "*Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its Centre d'Art Religieux*" and the "*Theatre Royale*" (6 different kinds of reasons to go there).

Question 3: Preferences

None of the elements of the list proposed to Mons residents can really be considered as their "favourite" because the results are very scattered. The element with the highest percentage of "first choice" answers is the "*Mons.Expo and related activities*" (12%). Other attractors mentioned as preferred by lower percentages of residents are the "*Beffroi*" and the "*Theatre Royale*" (7% each one). The same thing happens if we analyse the medium preferences score of the Mons' attractors: we find again the three elements mentioned before as "first choice", all with the same percentage of 10%.

Further information about the real preferences of the sample emerge from the open question part, which shows a panorama of cultural identity slightly different to the list proposed to residents: according to the residents' answers, the most popular places of Mons are the Grand Place (mentioned by 17% of the sample and "*Le Carré*"), the coffees and pubs (7%) and the Historic downtown district streets, particularly the "*piétonnier*" (pedestrian) area (with another 7%). Regarding resident's "second choices" we find again the coffees and pubs (12%), together with the shopping areas (10%); and concerning the "third choices", again we have the coffees and pubs (same percentage as before, 12%), and the monuments and historic downtown area (10%).

The conclusion of this part of the survey is that residents' preferences are related in a quite balanced way both to built heritage of the city and to the convivial atmosphere of its streets and of its activities offer.

Question 4: Representativeness

The last question is an open question, about the three places, or elements of intangible heritage, that the residents consider most representative of the city of Mons. The first part of the question, regarding the most representative element, has been answered by the 86% of the sample. The results are very scattered: considering only the valid answers, the most voted elements are the "Beffroi" (14%) and the "Singe de l'Hotel de Ville", the "Dou dou", the "Grand Place" and "Monuments and Historic Downtown area" (11% each one). If we regroup all the answers (including those not mentioned because not too much representative), we can see that 58% are built heritage elements, and only 28% are non-tangible (mainly the *Dou dou*). The remaining percentage belongs to the category "others".

Regarding the second part of the question, about the second element most representative of Mons, we have to notice first of all that the percentage of answers is 83%. Of this percentage, 14% goes to the "Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its *Centre d'Art Religieux*" and another 14% to the "Dou dou". Other answers point to the commercial centres or shopping areas (11%), and again to the "Grand Place" and the coffees and pubs of the city (9% each). If, as done before, we regroup all the answers (including those not mentioned because not too much representative), we can see that the proportion tangible vs. intangible is more balanced: 40% of answers regard built heritage elements, and 43% non tangible (mainly *Dou dou* and commercial areas).

Finally, the last part of the question, about the third element most representative of the city, has been answered by just 74% of the sample. Of this percentage, the 16% goes to the "Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its *Centre d'Art Religieux*", 13% to the "Fairs and events (*Mons.expo, Imagix, foire...*)" 10% to "Beffroi" and another 10% to "Monuments and the Historic Downtown district". Again, if we regroup all the answers (including those not mentioned because not too much representative), the proportion tangible vs. intangible is

more balanced: 45% of answers regard built heritage elements, and 32% non tangible (mainly "Fairs and events").

Concerning the reasons why the subjects decide that something is representative of Mons, the analysis does not provide very representative information because the explanations given by the subjects are very scattered. However, it is worth to notice how the most cited reasons are "Representative, symbolic" and "Nice, pleasant". The first category is frequently associated to the "Sainte Waudru Cathedral and its *Centre d'Art Religieux*" and to the "*Singe de l'Hotel de Ville*", while the second is quite distributed among all the attractors.

Conclusions

This survey provides very interesting information about the perception that Mons' residents have of the cultural and tourist offer of their city. First of all we have to say that, as happened with the previous survey addressed to tourists, our sample is almost exclusively composed of subjects under 29 years old (and 74% under 18 years old). This means that the results are to be considered pertinent only for this segment of population. The most interesting remark that we can do is that a good part of the built heritage of the city seems to be well known and frequently visited, while there are other places (*Carré des Arts* and *Musée Jean Lescarts*) that receive almost no visits at all. Another surprising remark regards how popular theatre is, particularly if we consider that it is not associated to school activities. Beside this, leisure activities are the most representative: go to fairs, meet new people, have a drink with friends in the coffees of the downtown areas, go shopping or to cinema.

Final conclusions and proposals

Because of the predominance of young people (mainly from 12 to 29 years old) in the sample evaluated, the following conclusions must be considered particularly (but not exclusively) relevant for this segment of population. The image of Mons is mainly associated to built heritage and to intangible heritage. Natural Heritage is scarcely considered (it has been detected in the surveys, but in very little percentages). The interesting thing about Mons is that built

heritage is known thanks to the dynamisation activities that take place in it: not only school visits but also offer designed to interest the segment of ages we are analysing. In our opinion the municipality is doing a good job on the design of an offer that makes heritage and cultural activities interesting and appealing for young generations. We can only suggest to develop furthermore the natural heritage offer, fostering activities in the parks and gardens of the cities and dedicating more resources to the enhancement of green areas in the city.

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