

Historical Museums of Guanajuato and their Recovery After COVID: A Panel Data Model

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Abstract. According to Lobatón et al. (2020) the tourism contribution to the economy of the state of Guanajuato is substantial, in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with data from the Secretary of Economy (SE, 2023) the tourism GDP before the COVID-19 pandemic amounted to 92,674,800,202 constant pesos at 2018 prices. The participation of historical museums as destinations of interest to locals and tourists should be recognized. According to the Cultural Information System (SIC, 2022) of the Mexican Secretary of Culture, the state of Guanajuato has a total of 1,107 museums distributed in its different municipalities, however, the historical museums that concentrate the greatest dynamism in influx of people are: the Regional Museum of Guanajuato Alhóndiga de Granaditas located in Guanajuato city, followed by the Historical Museum of San Miguel de Allende, and the Casa de Hidalgo Museum. The objective of this research is to analyse the economic impact of tourism activity related to museum visits in the state of Guanajuato before the COVID-19 pandemic and after its emergence, that is, from 2016 to 2022. The analysis is based on a panel data econometric model, where the GDP of the State, and the following explanatory variables: the participation of tourism activity in municipalities with historical museums in the State, the number of residents per municipality, the flow of domestic and international visitors to historical museums in the State, investments in tourism and cultural activity. The results show that if the variable of investment in tourism activities is increased by 1%, an increase of 28.7% in the state's tourism GDP would be expected. Its participation in the state's total GDP would be close to 13.1%. In contrast, the main historical museums in Guanajuato are expected to receive 97,363 national and international visitors in 2021 and 266,656 in 2022. In terms of tourism GDP, this recovery has an impact on the economic environment of the state, emphasizing that the performance of historical museums is 16.39% of the total for the state. In summary, we can say that the economic effects of tourism activities are multifactorial, but the study of the environment and the participation of historical museums are essential to stimulate conditions that favour economic growth in the state of Guanajuato. **Keywords:** Economic impact of tourism; Historical museums, Guanajuato state.

1 Introduction

The State of Guanajuato is nationally recognized for its rich historical heritage, shaped by various significant episodes throughout different stages of the country's culture and identity. This state, once home to the Chichimeca, Otomi, and Náhuatl ethnic groups before the Spanish conquest, has undergone a wide range of transformations and developments, all of which are preserved in its historical museums.

This urban, demographic, productive, and cultural evolution has generated a wealth of documentation that should be preserved and shared with local, national, and international audiences. Moreover, it creates opportunities for new generations to connect with their cultural heritage, fostering intellectual development. Additionally, this heritage serves as a valuable resource for economic growth within the state, as evidenced by indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), among others.

The state's efforts, which combine the cooperation of various ministries, agencies and public and private institutions, such as the Secretary of Tourism of Mexico

(SECTUR), the Cultural Information System (SIC), the Integral Analysis of Tourism Data (DATATUR), the State Government and Municipalities of Guanajuato, the State Institute of Culture and its State Network of Museums, among others, stimulate and monitor cultural activities, historic preservation and tourism. At the same time, they also contribute to economic activities that are interlinked.

According to data from SIC Mexico [1], before the COVID-19 pandemic, Guanajuato welcomed 11,450,993 visitors to its historical museums in 2019. However, due to measures taken to contain the global outbreak, tourism activities were significantly impacted, leading to a period of inactivity in historical museums from April 2020 to May 2021. Since then, a gradual recovery in visitor numbers has been observed.

In this study, we have taken into account various factors, including participation in tourist activities in municipalities with significant historical museums, the number of residents in each municipality, the volume of domestic and international visitors to these museums, and investments in tourism and culture.

The primary objective of this work is to analyze the economic impact of tourism related to museum visits in the state of Guanajuato, both before the COVID-19 pandemic and during its recovery, covering the period from 2016 to 2022.

This work includes a literature review, data analysis, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

2 Literature review

2.1 Evolution of economic activities in the state of Guanajuato

Guanajuato has undergone significant changes in its productive and economic structure. According to Anaya & Pastrana [2], the state's haciendas played a crucial role through agriculture, livestock, and later mining. Bustamante [3] highlights that mining activities and the trade of minerals and precious metals marked a key period of growth for Guanajuato. Around the year 1700, the Spanish Crown encouraged mining operations in the region, leaving behind a legacy of traditions, remnants, and industrial heritage now preserved in the historical museums of Guanajuato.

Vargas [4] notes that agriculture, manufacturing, and commercial activities especially in the context of digital transformation along with tourism, are the sectors that support the state's economic indicators.

According to SECTUR [5], tourism in Guanajuato generates over 200,000 jobs. This sector was one of the hardest hit by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic; however, its recovery has positioned Guanajuato as the seventh most visited state in Mexico. Before the pandemic, the tourism GDP was approximately 96.675 billion pesos, accounting for 8.1% of the national total. In the post-pandemic period, this sector experienced a recovery of 14.3 percentage points.

2.2 Cultural Infrastructure

According to Castillo [6], cultural infrastructure encompasses the provision of attractions such as theaters, art education centers, museums, archaeological sites, and cultural centers. These elements stimulate the concentration of artistic, historical, social, and other expressions, collectively forming a cultural imaginary that helps to shape and preserve identity over time.

Among these components, museums are particularly significant. Galarza [7] argues that museums serve as the original and optimal venues for preserving, evaluating, and disseminating cultural heritage. Similarly, Galindo [8] emphasizes that museums connect society to its historical roots, facilitating an understanding of contemporary contexts, technologies, and expressions.

Currently, the SIC [1] has registered a total of 1,107 public and private museums in Mexico, each with different themes but unified by the objective of preserving and promoting culture. This cultural infrastructure includes several subcategories based on the specific purposes of the museums. Figure 1 illustrates the various types of museums, and in this case

study, differentiating historical museums from other categories will help us understand their impact on the state's economy.

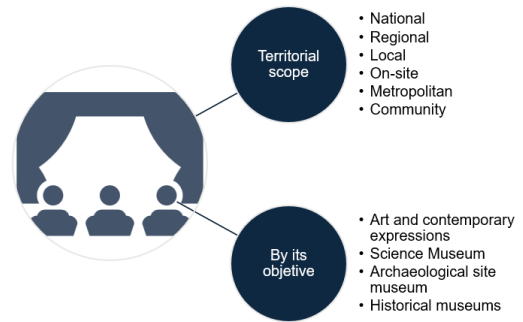


Fig. 1. Types of museums that make up the cultural infrastructure. Source: Prepared by the authors with information from the National Institute of Anthropology and History INAH [9].

2.3 Economy of culture, tourism and historical museums

According to González [10], the economy of culture has emerged from the intersection of two trends: the outsourcing of processes within the economic sector and the growing appreciation for culture and historical heritage. Figure 2 illustrates the key elements of the cultural economy.

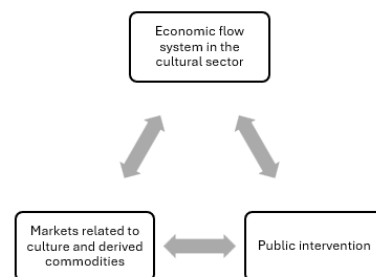


Fig. 2. Elements of the economics of culture. Source: Own elaboration.

Guanajuato is a major tourist attraction, thanks to its diverse offerings. Quartino [11] explains that the state features two cities recognized as World Heritage Sites, six magical towns, five archaeological zones, and six wine routes, all contributing to its competitive participation in cultural activities.

Monroy [12] emphasizes in his study that local tourism was one of the key pillars for Mexico's economic recovery. In this regard, he points out that promoting such activities through dissemination, cultural promotion, and investment contributes to the stabilization of the cultural sector.

Carreón & Alvear [13] explain that the reopening of museums after the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most challenging issues globally, as social priorities were focused on essential goods and services, given the economic context shaped by the pandemic. This context was marked by widespread unemployment and the

enforcement of public policies aimed at lockdowns and social distancing. However, cultural tourism emerged as a post-pandemic challenge that the population addressed, representing a new opportunity for social interaction and recreation.

De los Santos [14] explains that the effects of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on museums were catastrophic. However, digital resources contributed to the dissemination and continuation of activities during the lockdown. The historical statistics before and after the pandemic are drastically different, and the recovery of in-person visits is gradual, challenging, and requires the support of governmental involvement.

According to the Secretaría de Turismo de Guanajuato [15], the colonial architecture of the region, designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, draws visitors from around the globe. The museums provide valuable historical perspectives, while events like the Cervantino International Festival one of Latin America's most significant cultural festivals attract international artists and audiences. Additional events, such as the Guanajuato International Film Festival and the Jazz Festival, further enrich the tourism landscape.

Guanajuato's diverse attractions include hiking trails in the mountains, ecotourism opportunities in natural areas like Sierra de Guanajuato National Park, and religious tourism at sites such as the Sanctuary of Atotonilco. The region also boasts a variety of hotels, restaurants, and tourist services. Investments in hotel and transportation infrastructure have significantly fueled the growth of the tourism industry [16].

Furthermore, Guanajuato is home to 19 historical museums, classified as such by DATATUR [17]. Table 1 provides information on the cultural districts and municipalities where these museums are located. According to the classification proposed by INAH [9], the exhibits primarily focus on the significant events of the Mexican War of Independence, showcasing original objects or replicas that represent these historical episodes.

Table 1. Historical museums in the state of Guanajuato that represent the period of Mexican Independence. Source: SIC México [1], INAH [9].

Museum	Municipalities
Museo Miguel Hidalgo	Abasolo
Museo Ferrocarrilero José Cardozo Téllez	Acámbaro
Museo Comunitario Fray Bernardo Padilla	
Museo de Celaya, Historia Regional	Celaya
Centro de Interpretación Histórica. Las Batallas de Celaya	
Museo Casa del Dr. José María Luis Mora	Comonfort
Museo de Sitio Casa de Hidalgo (Excurato de Dolores)	Dolores Hidalgo
Museo de la Independencia Nacional	
Casa Museo José Alfredo Jiménez	

Museo del Bicentenario	Guanajuato
Museo Casa de las Leyendas de Guanajuato	
Museo Regional de Guanajuato Alhóndiga de Granaditas	
Museo Casa de Tía Aura	León
Museo de Arte e Historia de Guanajuato	
Museo de Sitio San Vicente de Hidalgo	Pénjamo
Museo Histórico Casa de Hidalgo (La Francia Chiquita)	San Felipe
Museo de Historia de Mineral de Pozos	San Luis de la Paz
Museo Histórico de San Miguel de Allende	San Miguel de Allende
Museo Histórico Casa de Allende	

In this context, there is another classification of historical museums in Guanajuato, recognized as the State Network of Museums. According to the State Institute of Culture of Guanajuato [18], this network consists of seven cultural poles across three municipalities, housing the majority of the region's artifacts, documents, and artistic works that represent the history of both Guanajuato and Mexico. These museums also engage in ongoing recreational and educational activities for the general public and foreign visitors, allowing them to experience the art, history, and culture within these significant spaces. The museums include:

I) Conde Rul Museum: Established in the 1800s, this museum is located in the center of the state capital.

II) Museo del Pueblo de Guanajuato: Built in 1775 and opened to the public in 1979, it showcases archaeological pieces, colonial paintings, and miniature collections, among other exhibits.

III) Diego Rivera House Museum: Located in the city of Guanajuato, this museum recreates the life of the painter after whom it is named, featuring rooms filled with sketches, drawings, and photo murals.

IV) Museo Casa de Arte Olga Acosta - José Chávez Morado: Situated in the city of Guanajuato, this museum exhibits period pieces of ceramics, tapestries, and furniture from the 14th to the 18th centuries.

V) Museo Palacio de los Poderes: Open to the public as a museum since 2017, this museum is located in the city of Guanajuato and features the headquarters of the Executive Branch, offering both permanent and temporary exhibitions, along with the Library of Guanajuato.

VI) Hermenegildo Bustos Museum: Located in Purísima del Rincón, this museum displays works by one of the state's most notable artists, known for his historical portraiture reflecting significant events in the region.

VII) José and Tomás Chávez Morado Museum: Situated in Silao, Guanajuato, this museum features nine rooms showcasing artworks in painting, engraving, and sculpture, among other forms.

In the State of Guanajuato, numerous historical museums across its municipalities are dedicated to the history and culture of both the state and the country.

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of these museums, highlighting that the concentration in each identified location ranges from one to 15 museums.

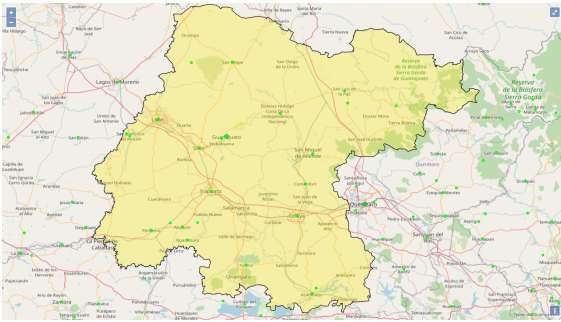


Fig. 3. Distribution of the total number of historical museums in the state of Guanajuato. Source: Prepared by the authors with data from SIC Mexico [1] and INAH [9].

3 Methodology

3.1 Panel data econometric model

Before conducting the panel data analysis, the Hausman test is performed to determine the suitability between a fixed effects or random effects model. The Hausman test involves rejecting the null hypothesis, which indicates that the estimators differ, and concludes that the fixed effects model is preferable to the random effects model. If the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, then the use of random effects can be considered [19].

After performing the Hausman test, the null hypothesis—that the differences in the coefficients are not systematic—was rejected, indicating that the best model specification is the fixed effects model.

Fixed effects models are those that consider α_i as a group-specific constant term, meaning they analyse the entire population. For this type of panel data model, it is assumed that certain characteristics of the observed units can affect or bias the prediction. Thus, it is considered that there is a different constant term for each observed unit, and it is assumed that the individual effects are independent of each other [20]. To ensure that the panel data model produces the corresponding estimates, specifying that the differences between variables are constant and fixed, the model is specified as follows:

$$Y_{it} = v_i + B_1X_{1it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

Where V_i is a vector of dichotomous variables for each observed unit, through which the unobservable heterogeneity is incorporated into the constant term of the model [21].

Therefore, the following model is formulated:
 (State GDP)
 (2)

- = α
- +X1 (Share of tourism activity in municipalities with historical museums)
- +X2 (Number of inhabitants per municipality)
- +X3 (domestic visitor arrivals)
- +X4 (foreign visitor arrivals)

+X5 (Investment in tourism and cultural activities)

The state Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is proposed as the dependent variable. For the estimation of the model, a panel data model was chosen, aiming to determine whether there are changes in the variables over time, considering the historical period from 2016 to 2022. This time frame includes data prior to the pandemic as well as evidence following the reopening of historical museums in Guanajuato after the directives from the Ministry of Health to resume tourism and cultural activities in Mexico.

Table 2 presents the operationalization of the selected variables for the panel data model.

Table 2. Operationalization of variables

Variable	Definición	Source
Gross Domestic Product GDP	The GDP is the sum of the monetary value of all final goods and services produced by a country or federal entity during a specific period (commonly a year or a quarter).	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática INEGI [22]
Participation of tourism activity in historical museums	Contribution in thousands of pesos from tourism activities in each municipality where the historical museums of Guanajuato are located.	Sistema de Información Cultural de México [23]
Number of inhabitants per city	Population of each city where the historical museums of Guanajuato are located.	Sistema de Consulta de Información Censal SCINCE [24]
Domestic visitor arrivals	Number of Mexican visitors registered at each historical museum in Guanajuato across different municipalities.	Sistema de Información Cultural de México [25]
Foreign visitor arrivals	Number of visitors from other countries registered at each historical museum in Guanajuato across different municipalities.	Sistema de Información Cultural de México [26]
Investment in tourism and cultural activities	Public investment (state and federal) in tourism and cultural activities in the state of Guanajuato is considered, and the proportionality is calculated based on the number of inhabitants per municipality where the historical museums of Guanajuato are located.	Secretaría de Turismo SECTUR [27]

4 Results

To compile the data panel, information from 2016 to 2022 was used based on the analysis variables proposed in the model. One of these variables pertains to the

number of national and international visitors to the 80 main historical museums in the state of Guanajuato. Additionally, other variables were included for each year within the analysis period, with the model's values presented in Table 3.

The results indicate that a 1% increase in investment in tourism activities is expected to yield a 28.7% increase in the state's tourism GDP, with its contribution to the total state GDP approaching 13.1%. Furthermore, since the reopening following the COVID-19 pandemic, visits to the main historical museums in Guanajuato have gradually recovered, with 97,363 domestic and foreign visitors recorded in 2021 and 266,656 in 2022.

Table 3. Results of the data panel model

	Tourism activity participation	Domestic visitor arrivals	Foreign visitor arrivals	Investment in tourism and cultural activities
Coefficient	0.11253	0.0734	0.093	0.2871

Additionally, it is important to note that the dependent variable of the panel data model is the tourism GDP of Guanajuato. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, this figure was approximately 92,674,800,202 pesos, while in its recovery phase in 2021, it rose to 96,990,967,662 pesos in constant 2018 prices. This recovery significantly impacts the economic environment of the state, with the performance of historical museums accounting for 16.39% of the total.

Figure 4 illustrates the trend of total visitors to the main historical museums in Guanajuato before, during, and after the recovery from the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

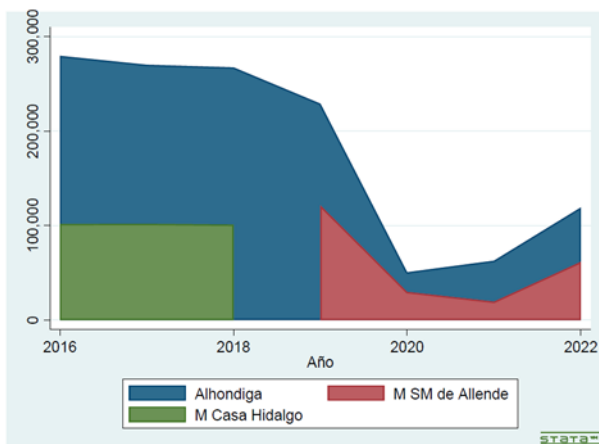


Fig. 4. Trend of visits to the main historical museums in the state of Guanajuato before, during and in their recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic. Source: Own elaboration with data from the National Institute of Anthropology and History [9].

Table 4 presents the historical museums of Guanajuato that appear in the national ranking of the National Institute of Anthropology and History [9] from 2016 to 2022. Throughout the analysis period, the Alhóndiga de Granaditas has consistently ranked as the most visited historical museum by both national and

international visitors. It occupied 6th place from 2016 to 2018, dropped to 7th in 2019, fell to 8th in 2020, but recovered to 4th place in 2021, remaining in 5th place in 2022.

The Historical Museum of San Miguel de Allende first appeared in the ranking in 2019 at 12th place, and by 2022, it climbed four spots to 8th place nationally, indicating a growing affinity among visitors. The Casa de Hidalgo Museum, recognized as the third most important historical museum in Guanajuato based on visitor numbers, ranked 14th from 2016 to 2018.

Table 4. Visitors to the main museums in Guanajuato (number of people). Source: own elaboration with data from INAH [9].

Alhóndiga de Granaditas			
Año	Nº	Local	Foreigner
2016	6	339213	15479
2017	6	385203	16247
2018	6	374155	18064
2019	7	319354	20305
2020	8	46796	3784
2021	4	72290	4976
2022	5	158626	16636
Museo Histórico de San Miguel de Allende			
Año	Nº	Local	Foreigner
2016			
2017			
2018			
2019	12	175905	7358
2020	11	28725	1016
2021	11	19350	748
2022	8	88232	3162
Museo Casa de Hidalgo			
Año	Nº	Local	Foreigner
2016	14	146557	10853
2017	14	151533	3079
2018	14	148122	3884
2019	-	-	-
2020	-	-	-
2021	-	-	-
2022	-	-	-

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the significance of the historical museums in Guanajuato extends beyond the dynamism of the state's tourism activity. These museums play a vital role in the economic impact of tourism while preserving the history and identity of the people of

Guanajuato and all of Mexico. This type of cultural infrastructure serves as a bridge between safeguarding heritage for the education and awareness of the population, which is intrinsically linked to tourism. Historical museums stimulate numerous related processes and sectors.

The tourist appeal of these museums remains a crucial factor in attracting visitors from around the world, generating both direct and indirect revenue through spending in hotels, restaurants, and local businesses, which positively impacts the state's economy. Additionally, by contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage, the museums enhance the historical value of the region, providing educational experiences that enrich the community's understanding of its identity and heritage.

Moreover, the Secretary of Tourism of Guanajuato continues to promote various tourism initiatives, focusing on cumulative investment projects in historical centers to ensure their protection and preservation. Investments in properties with tourist and cultural value, such as historical museums, have increased by 18.7% since 2021, positioning Guanajuato as the fifth national destination for historical tourism in 2022.

It is essential to recognize that investments in cultural tourism activities are vital for Guanajuato's economic growth through this traditional and competitive sector.

For future research, we recommend integrating the other classifications of museums in Guanajuato, which total 1,107, including contemporary art, science, and archaeological museums. Additionally, implementing an international strategy to promote cultural activities is advisable, focusing on local events, festivals, museums, and historical sites through digital platforms and traditional media. Establishing partnerships with the private and tourism sectors can maximize the visibility of the cultural offerings, attract more visitors, and stimulate greater economic dynamism.

Finally, creating a contingency plan for crises like the 2020 health emergency would be beneficial, aiming to develop tourism alternatives that minimize damage in the face of external situations that threaten visitor flow, it is proposed that digital atlases be developed where the information, such as the one used as the database in this study, is made available, specifically, the mapping of each of the historical museums in the state of Guanajuato. This would allow visitors to easily access this information and plan their visits more effectively, including details about locations, types of exhibitions, hours of operation, and costs. This initiative would not only benefit domestic visitors but also help position these cultural centers within the itineraries of international tourists.

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