



Article

# University Students' Perception of the Dehesa and the Associated Traditional Trades

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**Abstract:** The dehesas are one of the most emblematic landscapes of the Extremadura region (Spain). Along with its natural values, it preserves a wide repertoire of knowledge and trades rooted in the history and tradition of rural communities. However, the knowledge and practices that have characterized life in this environment are currently under serious threat. Faced with this problem, this study was based on the premise that, for individuals to commit themselves to the care and transmission of heritage, it is first necessary for them to know, understand and value it. For this reason, the main objective was to determine the knowledge and appreciation of university students with respect to the dehesa and the ancestral practice of grazing. It also aimed to analyze which are the most valued methodologies, activities, and future strategies for understanding and preserving these cultural landscapes and their ancestral practices. To this end, 400 university students were surveyed, and various quantitative and qualitative analyses were carried out. Quantitative techniques include analyses based on weighted averages, contingency tables and the chi-square test, while qualitative techniques are based on word frequency analysis and inductive content analysis. Despite coming from an environment dominated by this landscape and being one of the few regions that still preserve the ancestral practice of pastoralism, the results corroborated the students' lack of understanding of the dehesa and the variety of uses it offers. In addition, it was evident that they have hardly frequented this landscape and have not participated in on-site educational experiences. It also revealed the importance of experiential and sensory activities in the understanding and appreciation of the rural environment and its traditions. The results can be useful for improving the design of educational tourism products based on intangible heritage. It can also be useful for adapting teaching strategies and activities to the level of knowledge and experiences of students, helping to ensure the success of the educational experience.

**Keywords:** dehesa; traditional trades; Extremadura; educational activities



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## 1. Introduction

The Spanish dehesa and its Portuguese counterpart, the montado, constitute an extensive production system characteristic of the Mediterranean. Its productive base is based mainly on livestock activity, complemented by agricultural and extractive practices [1,2]. This agrosystem has a great territorial significance on the Iberian Peninsula, where it extends over approximately 3.5 million hectares in Spain and 1 million hectares in Portugal [3].

Historically, the difficulties in reaching a unanimous consensus on the meaning attributed to dehesas has been one of the main limitations for debate and decision making [2,4]. Examples of this diversity of meanings are reflected in the legislation of Extremadura and Andalusia, the two communities with the highest percentage of dehesa land in Spain, accounting for 35% and 27%, respectively [5].

In the case of Extremadura, Law 1/1986 of 2 May 1986 on Extremadura's Dehesa defines it as "any rustic estate in which more than one hundred hectares of its surface area are susceptible, according to its most appropriate agricultural use, up to extensive cattle raising" [6] (p. 5). Meanwhile, Andalusia, through Law 7/2010 of 14 July 2010 on the Dehesa defends a more environmentalist approach, focused on the sustainable exploitation of the landscape by human beings: "The dehesa is a humanized landscape that constitutes an example of optimal coexistence of human beings with the environment, a model of sustainable management in which the resources offered by nature are exploited without neglecting their conservation" [7] (p. 1).

In view of the diversity of meanings and in order to have a concrete definition of the term, the Dehesa Green Book defines it as "a multifunctional livestock and/or hunting exploitation system in which at least 50% of the surface area is occupied by dehesa with scattered adult acorn-producing trees and with a fraction of the area covered between 5 and 60%" [4] (p. 7).

This definition specifies the need for acorn-producing trees such as holm oaks, cork oaks, oaks, and gall oaks. This is very significant, since these tree species are associated with extensive forms of exploitation, specifically linked to the dehesas. Likewise, a minimum percentage of wooded area is established, thus ensuring the convergence of environmental and productive values.

Historically, the dehesa has represented a compromise between production and conservation, configuring a landscape adapted to an environment with notable productive limitations. These include impoverished soils, a climate characterized by a marked seasonality and the scarcity and irregularity of water resources [8,9]. Despite these disadvantages, it has managed to maintain itself thanks to a discrete but constant production of natural resources obtained from its main components: trees, dehesa and livestock [10,11].

The efficient use of resources in this system is a source of lessons learned and constitutes an example of sustainable multifunctional agricultural systems that are being demanded at the European and international levels [12]. This management approach manages to effectively reconcile the generation of ecological and economic values [9], thus highlighting its relevance in the current context of the search for environmentally responsible practices, in line with the "eco" paradigm [13].

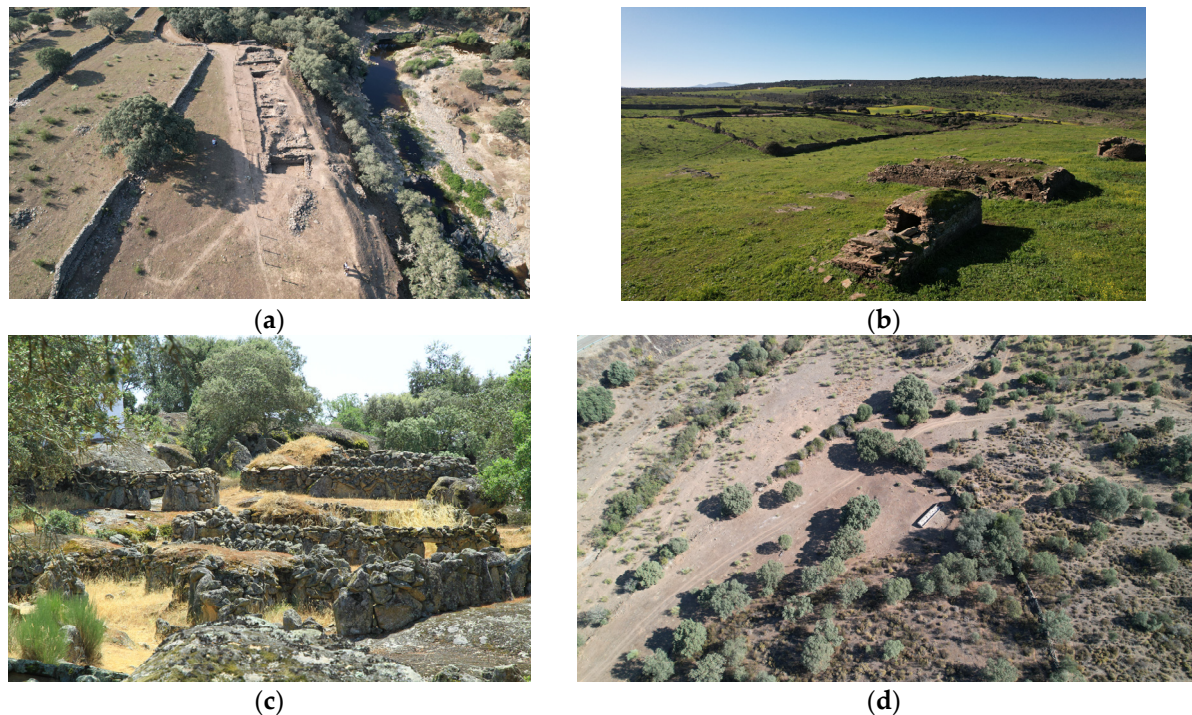
In addition to its economic value, derived from primary production and its subsequent transformation and commercialization, mainly linked to the agri-food sector (meat and dairy products, asparagus, honey, mushrooms. . .) and forestry (wood, cork, charcoal. . .), the dehesa offers a variety of externalities, i.e., non-market functions [11,14–16].

Environmental externalities include the maintenance of biodiversity, soil protection against erosion and desertification, CO<sub>2</sub> fixation and fire prevention. These characteristics have led the dehesa to be considered among the systems of High Natural Value (HVN) according to the European Union, due to its significant contribution to the conservation of rural areas [17,18].

The socio-cultural externalities refer to the abundant and diverse agrarian heritage treasured by the dehesa landscapes, and which imply the consideration of the dehesas as a cultural landscape [ . . . ] [15,19]. The evolution of farming practices has generated a valuable immovable cultural legacy that includes mills, huts, ovens, corrals and water troughs, among other architectural elements (Figure 1). These constructions serve as witnesses of the customs and ways of life rooted in the local communities.

It also contains an important intangible heritage associated with a wide repertoire of knowledge and trades rooted in the history and tradition of rural communities, constituting an ethnological heritage of great importance and projecting the cultural identity of certain populations [10,20]. Examples of this are centenary practices such as transhumance (movement at latitude) and transterminance (movement at altitude over short distances), the artisanal production of meat products, charcoal making, traditional beekeeping, the habitual extraction of cork with an axe or the manufacture of charcoal using ancestral techniques. These activities have not only represented a source of subsistence for the populations, but

also represent the preservation of a cultural heritage that has been transmitted through different generations, enriching the social fabric and strengthening community ties.



**Figure 1.** Material heritage of the dehesa: (a) Villaviejas de Tamuja site and mill. Dehesa boyal de Botija, (b) oven and hut. La Cumbre, (c) Corralás. Torrequemada, (d) trough. Zafra.

The conformation of this agro-ecosystem was notably influenced by the practice of transhumance [10,21–23]. This itinerant system of sheep farming involved the seasonal movement of livestock between low and high mountain dehesas. Specifically, it involved the strategic movement of livestock to dehesas or warm places during the colder months to face the winter, and the movement to mountain dehesas during the spring and summer. This practice responded to the climatic and feeding needs of the livestock, leaving a marked mark on the cultural landscape.

The reflection of transhumance was projected in the layout of the cattle trails (cañadas, veredas and cordeles), which served as transit routes for livestock. They cover almost the entire Iberian Peninsula, with a length of more than 125,000 km and a surface area of 450,000 hectares [24]. Likewise, the transhumant system generated a great impact on the historical landscape due to the construction of various livestock infrastructure such as sheepfolds (a place where cattle are gathered at night), huts (shelter used by shepherds taking advantage of the natural resources of the environment), drinking troughs (a place for cattle to drink) or resting places (a place for cattle to rest), and the projection of a particular gastronomy and culinary practices, which today constitute valuable examples of the tangible and intangible heritage associated with this ancestral practice [25,26].

In the conservation of this complex heritage network, the development of Law 3/1995 of 23 March 1995 on cattle trails [27] favored the conservation of the variety of elements associated with pastoral practices, as well as the recovery and social awareness for the protection of this precious cultural legacy [25].

Transhumance, as well as transterminance [28], allowed the optimal use of natural resources and encouraged mobility and social interaction between pastoral communities, promoting the exchange of knowledge, techniques and livestock-raising traditions along the transhumance routes. Therefore, this ancestral practice not only shaped the landscape and the economy of the dehesa, but also left a deep imprint on the culture and identity of the regions where it took place [29]. All of this contributed to the recognition of transhumance



on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2023 [30] and as a Representative Manifestation of Intangible Cultural Heritage under Royal Decree 385/2017 [31].

However, we are currently witnessing a gradual disappearance of this activity and of the traditional knowledge of shepherds, as well as the deterioration of livestock trails and agricultural heritage [25,26,29,32–34]. Industrial livestock farming is one of the main causes of the disappearance of transhumant practices [25]. In addition to this reason, there is the lack of generational regeneration in the sector, the lack of attention from the sectoral administrations, the high cost of transporting livestock and the harshness of the work activity, which currently only attracts people with a family heritage linked to this trade [35].

This progressive decline, which has been especially marked in recent years, has had several repercussions of a patrimonial nature. These include the current deteriorated state of the livestock trails and associated architecture, and the loss of pastoral customs and knowledge due to the lack of generational renewal. Equally important are the economic consequences, which are affecting the profitability of this traditional system. This also entails problems of environmental degradation and livestock and agricultural overexploitation, causing the retreat of trees and intensifying soil erosion.

The figure of the shepherd, understood as the guide and driver of the livestock through the farms, has disappeared, as have the practices of “*majadeo*” or “*redileo*”, an itinerant technique by which the livestock spent the night in different areas of the farm each day to fertilize and enrich the land. Today, wire fences guard the sheep and only on some occasions do shepherds guard the flocks. The same is true of the huts, which barely survive in the collective memory and, in some cases, as museum vestiges. For its part, wool has lost its commercial value and the manual shearing process has been replaced by machines, which has led to the disappearance of the diversity of specializations that used to exist [10].

The disappearance of traditional trades represents a significant loss for the *dehesa* and the communities that depend on it, not only from an economic point of view, but also from a cultural perspective. The loss of these trades entails the disappearance of ancestral techniques and knowledge, contributing to the erosion of the cultural identity of rural populations [36,37].

In spite of the fragile situation of the traditional shepherding profession and the transhumance phenomenon, its progressive valuation from an environmental, social, cultural, educational and recreational perspective is motivating a growing interest in the survival of these ancestral practices [35,38]. In particular, the implementation of rural tourism activities has been a great incentive for the revitalization of *dehesa* areas in general [9,39–42] and of the traditional trades in particular [2,37,43].

In rural areas, heritage-based tourism can play an important role in counteracting population decline, economic hardship and the loss of trades and traditions [44]. Specifically, intangible cultural heritage can promote sustainable tourism development in rural areas [45–49]. This is due to their ability to attract visitors and boost local commerce (economic sustainability), promote social cohesion and a sense of belonging (social sustainability), help protect biodiversity and improve knowledge about the sustainable use of natural resources (environmental sustainability) and facilitate the exchange of ancestral knowledge and know-how (cultural sustainability) [50].

The presence of an exclusive and particular intangible heritage is an added factor of attraction and appreciation, especially for contemporary tourists [46,47,49,51]. Immersion in local culture and learning opportunities have become key aspects for modern travelers, who value the possibility of participating in traditional activities, sharing emotions, learning about local history and customs and establishing genuine connections with rural communities [41,52–55].

In this sense, transhumance, as part of the intangible heritage [30,56], has become a real tourist attraction, as it adjusts to the interests of the demand [49]. In addition, it has a great attraction for pedagogical work at different educational levels [35,57]. Activities such as talks with shepherds, access to livestock infrastructures, guided visits along the

transhumance routes, workshops on pastoral culture and life in the countryside, as well as participation in shepherding activities are valuable didactic resources to enrich the educational experience around transhumance and its historical and cultural significance.

The environment of the dehesa is an ideal space to mitigate the lack of knowledge and contact of schoolchildren with agricultural practices, offering educational opportunities that allow the recognition and appreciation of knowledge and practices linked to the rural world [43]. It also allows students to immerse themselves in a natural and culturally relevant environment, where they can directly understand the importance of the balance between environmental conservation and the maintenance of human activities.

The main hypothesis is that students have a general lack of knowledge about the rural world and, specifically, about the dehesa, its meaning and the traditional trades that take place in it. The knowledge and appreciation of the dehesa and its associated heritage as an educational resource not only seeks to contribute to the valorization of these spaces and their conservation as cultural landscapes, but also to reflect on other problems such as the depopulation of the rural world, environmental degradation and the abandonment of traditional trades. All this favors an approach to the reality of the environment and the approach of sustainable future possibilities, linked to leisure and enjoyment.

This study was based on the premise that in order for individuals and communities to commit to the care and transmission of heritage, it is first necessary that they know, understand and value it [44,58]. For this reason, the main research objective was to determine the knowledge and appreciation that university students have of the dehesa and the ancestral practice of pastoralism. More specifically, the aim was to detect whether there is a global conception or whether, on the contrary, there are biases depending on parameters such as origin or frequency of visits to the areas.

This main objective was directly linked to other specific objectives. Among them, the aim was to analyze the regularity with which students visit the dehesa areas and their degree of participation in educational activities related to pastoralism, both in the past and at present. These aspects have been considered since direct visits to the rural environment and participation in experimental and interpretative activities are essential for a better understanding and appreciation of the social environment, customs, ways of life and the cultural landscape [59–63].

In addition, it sought to explore which methodologies, activities and future strategies are best valued by students to understand and preserve dehesa landscapes and their ancestral practices, as well as to design educational and tourism products that are adapted to their interests. This analysis is based on the importance of assessing the interests and motivations of learners [64] to design more sustainable management policies, which integrate the preferences of society towards these agrosystems of great cultural and environmental value [11,18].

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Study Area

This research focused on the autonomous community of Extremadura, located in the interior of Spain, where it also has a border with Portugal. This region is distinguished by its small population, with barely 1,059,501 inhabitants (INE, 2023). This translates into a low demographic density considering its extension (41,634 km<sup>2</sup>). It also presents a significant aging, with a high proportion of individuals over 65 years of age, which constitutes 21.84% of the total (INE, 2023).

Despite the fact that its productive structure is similar to the national model, its GDP is among the autonomous communities with the lowest level of income, reaching 22.531 M€ in 2022 [65]. The majority of the working population is concentrated mainly in the service and industrial sectors, representing 74.5% and 10.5%, respectively [66]. The agricultural sector, on the other hand, occupies only 8.2% of the working population, although its contribution to GDP is three times the national average, contributing 6.4% [67].

These characteristics reveal two structural challenges facing the region. On the one hand, depopulation, and the progressive aging of the population. On the other hand, the permanence of extensive agricultural and livestock farming practices conditioned by low productivity.

However, the socio-demographic and economic limitations, together with the secular oblivion to which Extremadura has been subjected by the central governments to reverse the adversities, have allowed the conservation of a natural environment with highly demanded values. These include environmental wealth, quality products, landscapes with less anthropic pressure or the conservation of a huge volume of heritage, cultural and natural assets [68,69].

An example of this is that Extremadura has more than 30% of its surface area protected due to its extraordinary landscapes [70]. In addition, 35% of the region's territory is covered by dehesa and, on many occasions, it overlaps with protected natural areas, providing added value [71] and, on numerous occasions, they overlap with those of protected natural areas, providing added value (Figure 2).

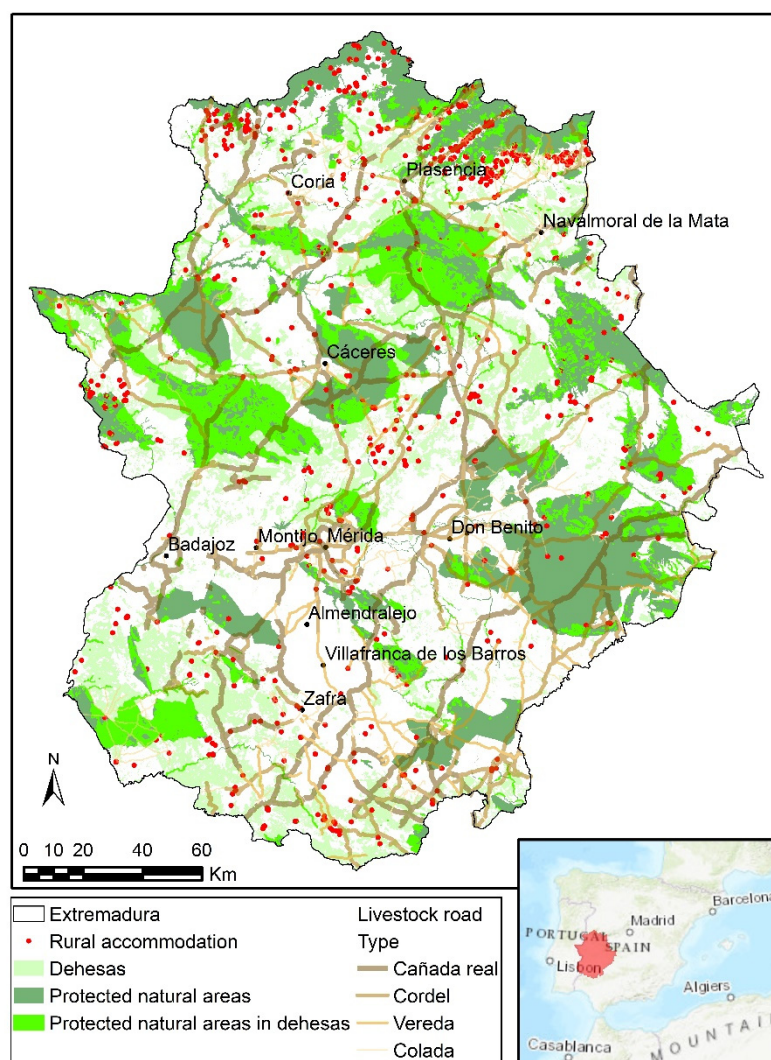


Figure 2. Study area.

Likewise, in Extremadura some of the trades and traditions associated with this agrosystem, with a great ethnological and identity value, are still preserved. This is the case for shepherding and transhumance, which, although in decline, still show some signs of continuity and interest in their preservation in the region. An example of this is the transhumant days held in Valverde de Leganés or Malpartida de Cáceres, where

the Livestock Route Information and Documentation Center is also located, as well as the existence of several ethnographic museums in charge of disseminating the transhumant memory. The community also has an extensive network of cattle trails.

The extension of the dehesa landscapes and the transhumance memory that the community treasures justify its potential for this study, as well as to promote initiatives that promote knowledge and appreciation of its diverse and unique natural and cultural heritage.

## 2.2. Design and Sample

According to its methodological approach, this study is classified in the didactic conceptual research genealogy, focused on the didactics of heritage in formal contexts [72]. Specifically, it tries to determine the knowledge and the valuation made by university students about the dehesa and the traditional shepherd's trade. Students were selected from different Bachelor's and Master's degrees taken at the University of Extremadura, an environment where it is possible to have an exhaustive knowledge of the ecosystem.

The type of analysis proposed was based on the premise that knowledge and appreciation of these elements are essential to contribute to their preservation, especially considering their delicate state of conservation.

Given the spatial limitation of this study, the objective of the analyses was not to establish generalizations, but to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in relation to the perceptions, experiences and desires of the student body. Non-probability convenience sampling was used to survey participants. Finally, 400 questionnaires were answered among the degrees of Bachelor in Primary Education, Bachelor in Early Childhood Education, double degree in Business Administration and Management and Tourism, Master in Anthropology, Master in Geographic Information Systems and Master in Teacher Training in Secondary Education, taught at the University of Extremadura and mostly attended by residents of the autonomous community.

Consideration was given to university degrees that address aspects related to the landscape from different perspectives, such as environmental education, anthropology or geospatial analysis. Training in these fields offers the opportunity to explore the contents related to the dehesa or traditional trades from a variety of complementary approaches.

Inclusion criteria for the selection of participants were based on the above-mentioned degree programs and the availability and willingness to participate in the study. Individuals who were not enrolled in the specified degrees or who were not willing to complete the questionnaire were excluded.

However, most of the respondents belonged to Primary Education (64.5%) and Early Childhood Education (23.5%), as the educational work with these elements from an early age is essential to promote the connection with the local environment, foster environmental awareness and preserve the local culture.

The surveys were conducted between February and March 2024. The margin of error was 4.82% with a confidence interval of 95%, considering the statistics of undergraduate students enrolled in that university in the 2023–2024 academic year [73]. In this sense, all calculations were performed considering a finite sample, applying the following algorithm:

$$n = \frac{N \cdot Z_{\alpha}^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{e^2 \cdot (N - 1) + Z_{\alpha}^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

where

n is the finite sample size;

N is the population size;

P is the probability of occurrence of the studied event (success);

Z is the statistical parameter that depends on the confidence level;

e is the maximum accepted estimation error;

q(1 – p) is the probability that the event under study does not occur.



With a sample of 400 participants, the aim was to ensure that the findings obtained were statistically sound for the understanding of the studied phenomenon. The size and characteristics of the sample allowed for a diversity of perspectives to be integrated, while at the same time providing sufficiently representative overall results.

### 2.3. Instruments and Techniques

In order to address the objectives set out in this study, an ad hoc survey was implemented using Google Forms [74]. Prior to its application, the questionnaire underwent a validation process by experts in the field to ensure its relevance and suitability for the research objectives. This was completed by the students in the classroom and with the presence of the teacher to ensure their understanding and adequate participation. It was used to explore the students' perceptions and assessment of the dehesa and the traditional occupation of shepherd.

More specifically, we sought to know if there is a global conception or if biases emerge depending on parameters such as origin, the frequency with which they visit this landscape or their previous participation in educational activities related to these topics. With this, the aim was not only to explore the level of knowledge of the students about their nearby heritage, but also to guide the planning of pedagogical activities and educational rural tourism experiences, adapted to their level of understanding. The final objective was to find out what measures and strategies can be adopted to enhance the value of the dehesa and the practice of pastoralism as important components of their local heritage, as well as to promote a greater appreciation of these elements among future generations.

The survey consisted of 18 items organized in four blocks: (I) sociodemographic characterization, (II) previous conceptions, (III) frequency of visits to dehesa areas and participation in educational experiences and (IV) preferences in relation to the realization of activities (Appendix A).

Subsequently, the responses obtained were subjected to a variety of analyses using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques [75,76]. This allowed for a more complete and in-depth understanding of the students' perceptions and evaluations. For this purpose, the SPSS v.29 statistical package, an Excel spreadsheet and the qualitative analysis software ATLAS.ti 23 were used as instruments. Finally, the research design acquired the structure shown in Figure 3.

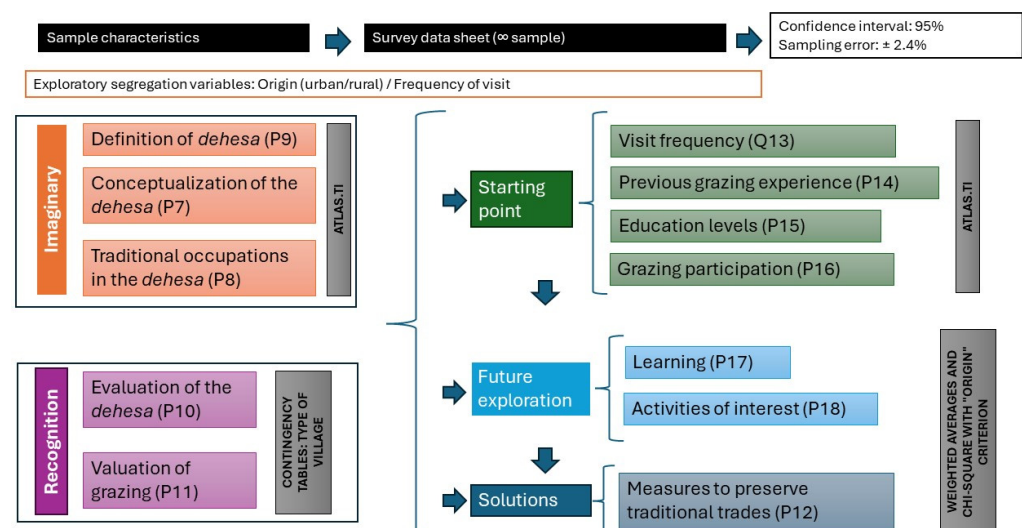


Figure 3. Research design.

Quantitative techniques included analyses based on weighted averages, contingency tables and chi-square. The calculation of the weighted averages used as a reference the scores given by the participants in questions 10, 11, 12, 17 and 18, which used the Likert scale (1–5). For this purpose, score 1 was considered to correspond to the minimum value



and score 5 to the maximum value. The calculation of the weighted average followed the following procedure:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\{(rvx1 \times 1) + (rvx2 \times 2) + (rvx3 \times 3) + (rvx4 \times 4) + (rvx5 \times 5)\}}{n}$$

where  $rvx$  is the number of responses that obtained score  $x$ , a value that ranges from 1 to 5, and where  $n$  is the equivalent of the number of responses.

As for the chi-square test ( $X^2$ ), it is a statistical test used to determine whether there is a significant difference between observed frequencies and expected frequencies in one or more categories in a contingency table. It is widely used in research to evaluate hypotheses about frequency distributions in categorical studies. There are several types of tests, although in this case we chose the Test of Independence, used to determine whether there is a relationship between two categorical variables in a population. The test is based on the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which implies the independence of the variables. This hypothesis can be rejected for the alternative ( $H_a$ ), which implies a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies or that the variables are not independent. This happens as long as the  $p$ -value is less than the chosen significance level (commonly 0.05) [77,78].

In this case, the chi-square analysis considered the following null hypotheses:

- There is a similar valuation of the various functionalities attributed to pastoralism regardless of the type of nucleus of origin of the students.
- There is a similar valuation of the various functionalities attributed to pastoralism regardless of the type of nucleus of origin of the students.
- There is no relationship between the willingness to participate in rural experiences and the current frequency of visits to the dehesa.

On the other hand, qualitative procedures were based on word frequency analysis using ATLAS.ti 23 [79], which makes it possible to synthesize the students' perceptions illustratively in word clouds. In the word clouds, the terms that have been mentioned on five or more occasions have been incorporated, although other terms have been identified in the global analysis that also appear, although less frequently. In addition, inductive content analysis was applied [80], based on the answers provided by students to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. In this process, the most significant segments were retrieved, coded and condensed into analyzable units [81]. Through this process of retrieval and coding, different categories were generated, defined by some common element. Fragments or extracts were then linked to a particular idea. This involved identifying various fragments in the text as evidence of these selected codes. Finally, a system of categories and subcategories was generated which allowed the responses to be structured in a systematic way.

### 3. Results

The application of different methodological processes to the objectives set out offered results that we categorized in five different blocks: imaginary, recognition, starting situation, exploration of the future and solutions.

#### 3.1. Imaginary

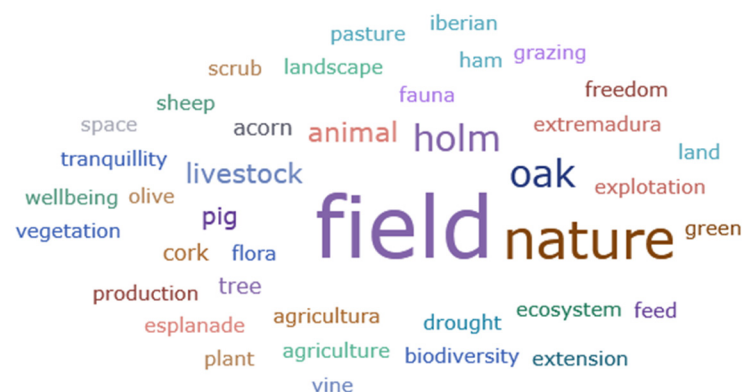
The students showed difficulties in defining the term “dehesa” and articulating concepts that represent this anthropized landscape. On the one hand, the definitions attributed to this agrosystem showed a lack of consensus regarding its main use, be it agricultural, livestock or forestry. On the other hand, a notable lack of knowledge was evident, as some students showed difficulties in discerning whether the dehesa is a transformed landscape or not (Table 1):

**Table 1.** Definition attributed to the dehesa.

	Frequency	%
Do not know/No answer	65	16.3
A natural environment without transformation	54	13.5
A transformed agricultural landscape	170	42.5
An agricultural utilization system	5	1.3
A forest harvesting system	13	3.3
A livestock utilization system	93	23.3
Total	400	100

Although recognition of the dehesa as an agricultural landscape transformed by man had the highest value (42.2%), the number of people who identified it as an untransformed natural environment stood out (13.5%). In addition, its main recognition as a system of extensive livestock use, in which pig farming predominates (23.3%), stood out over its forest (3.3%) and agricultural (1.3%) uses, which were scarcely represented.

Along with the concreteness of the term, the imaginary was determined according to the main concepts that are linked to the dehesa (Figure 4a) and the traditional trades that take place there (Figure 4b). In fact, both terms appeared on 1218 and 1188 occasions.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 4.** Conceptualization of the dehesa and related trades according to respondents: (a) concepts of dehesa, (b) traditional trades.

The terms associated with the dehesa showed a predominant tendency to describe its agricultural and livestock characteristics, while cultural, educational or recreational aspects received little attention. Thus, concepts such as countryside (11.90%), nature (10.26%), holm

oaks (8.05%), livestock (6.90%), animals (5.67%), pigs (4.84%) or acorns (4.76%) were highly represented. In contrast, terms such as tourism, trade, sport, history or tradition hardly appeared (0.08%).

Likewise, traditional occupations were identified mainly by their agricultural and livestock component over other possibilities of use. The most represented terms included cattle rancher (27.95%), farmer (27.44%) and shepherd (10.77%), and, to a lesser extent, jobs such as cork remover (4.63%), beekeeper (3.62%), hunter (2.19%), charcoal maker (0.76%), shearer (0.59%) or cowboy (0.08%).

These findings reveal limitations in the knowledge and perception of the dehesa among students, who were unaware of its true scope and potential, regardless of gender or origin. Despite its cultural, educational and recreational richness, the dehesa continues to be mostly linked to agricultural and livestock activities, ignoring its wide and diverse possibilities of use.

### 3.2. Recognition

The valuation attributed by the students to the dehesa shows a greater recognition of this landscape as an economic structure (3.77), followed by its identification as an educational (3.75) and environmental (3.68) structure, as shown by the weighted averages. At the opposite extreme, its recognition as a social structure had a substantially lower average (2.74) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Valuation of the dehesa.

	Ecosystem, Flora and Fauna	Structure Economic	Structure Social	Structure Cultural	Structure Educational
Option 1	7	6	44	16	8
Option 2	60	48	188	68	72
Option 3	297	303	369	264	219
Option 4	500	460	208	472	532
Option 5	370	445	110	395	425
Total	1234	1262	919	1215	1256
N	335	335	335	335	335
	3.68	3.77	2.74	3.63	3.75

The results revealed a more prominent perception of the dehesa in terms of functionality and economic profitability. In contrast, there was less recognition of its value as a landscape that fosters networks of solidarity and cooperation, or that projects relations of inequality in terms of access to land, distribution of economic benefits and social structure in rural communities.

The students recognized the social importance of pastoralism, associated with the promotion of intergenerational relationships (3.84), followed by its influence on the recovery of the environment (3.83) and as an educational resource (3.79). However, there was little recognition of pastoralism as an activity linked to leisure, festivals and celebrations (2.68) (Table 3). This fact shows the lack of familiarity of the students with the traditions, practices and events that are celebrated around this ancestral practice.

The high average values in the other factors revealed a recognition of the diverse functionalities attributed to pastoralism. Its relevance was recognized in historical knowledge (3.73), the creation of emotional ties (3.61), its contribution as an economic complement (3.56), the strengthening of the sense of belonging (3.50) and identity (3.49), as well as in the promotion of rural areas (3.41). These findings reveal the diverse influence of pastoralism on various aspects within the communities where it is practiced.

Table 3. Assessment of grazing.

	Complement Economic	Emotional	Knowledge of Local History	Sense of Belonging Nence	Sense of Identity	Recovery of the Natural Environment	Resource Educational	Leisure, Parties and Celebrations	Promotion of Rural Areas	Relationship Building Intergenerational
Option 1	15	9	8	10	10	6	10	68	19	2
Option 2	88	98	62	96	100	62	62	186	92	54
Option 3	306	303	276	330	309	249	255	270	357	288
Option 4	348	324	468	392	444	432	404	188	316	420
Option 5	435	475	435	345	305	535	540	185	360	510
Total	1192	1209	1249	1173	1168	1284	1271	897	1144	1274
N	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	332
	3.56	3.61	3.73	3.50	3.49	3.83	3.79	2.68	3.41	3.84



The results obtained with the chi-square test revealed that in most cases the null hypothesis was accepted, i.e., the independence of the variables was admitted. It follows that, regardless of the type of nucleus, there is a similar valuation of the various functionalities attributed to grazing. However, it is noteworthy that in one case the alternative hypothesis was considered, i.e., the one that implies a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies or that the variables are not independent. This occurred in the case of the valuation of the promotion of intergenerational relationships (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Assessment of the promotion of intergenerational relationships according to origin.

Type Core		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Rural	N	7	14	55	37	34	147
	%	4.8%	9.5%	37.4%	25.2%	23.1%	100.0%
Urban	N	12	32	64	42	38	188
	%	6.4%	17.0%	34.0%	22.3%	20.2%	100.0%
Total	N	21	46	121	80	72	340
	%	0	13.5%	35.6%	23.5%	21.2%	100.0%

The significance level obtained with the chi-square test (0.044) allowed us to reject the null hypothesis (Table 5). That is, there was sufficient evidence to affirm that the observed frequencies differed significantly between the variables. Students coming from an urban center showed greater awareness of the influence of pastoralism in fostering intergenerational relations.

**Table 5.** Chi-square significance level.

	Value	Gl	Asymptotic Sign (Bilateral)
Pearson's chi-square	15.869 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.044
Likelihood ratio	12.540	8	0.129
N of valid cases	340		

<sup>a</sup>. 5 boxes (33.3%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.31.

### 3.3. Starting Situation

The students' knowledge and perceptions of the dehesa and the traditional shepherding profession can be conditioned by the context and participation in experiences related to these realities. For this reason, different variables were considered to evaluate the students' initial situation: the frequency of visits to dehesa areas and participation in educational activities related to pastoralism, both in the past and at present.

Among the results, the low frequency with which students visit the dehesa areas was noted, with more than 50% visiting only once or twice a month (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Frequency of visits to the dehesa.

	Frequency	%
Do not know /No answer	65	16.3
Less than once a month	136	34.0
A couple of times a month	99	24.8
Once a week	55	13.8
Several times a week	43	10.8
Every day	2	0.5
Total	400	100

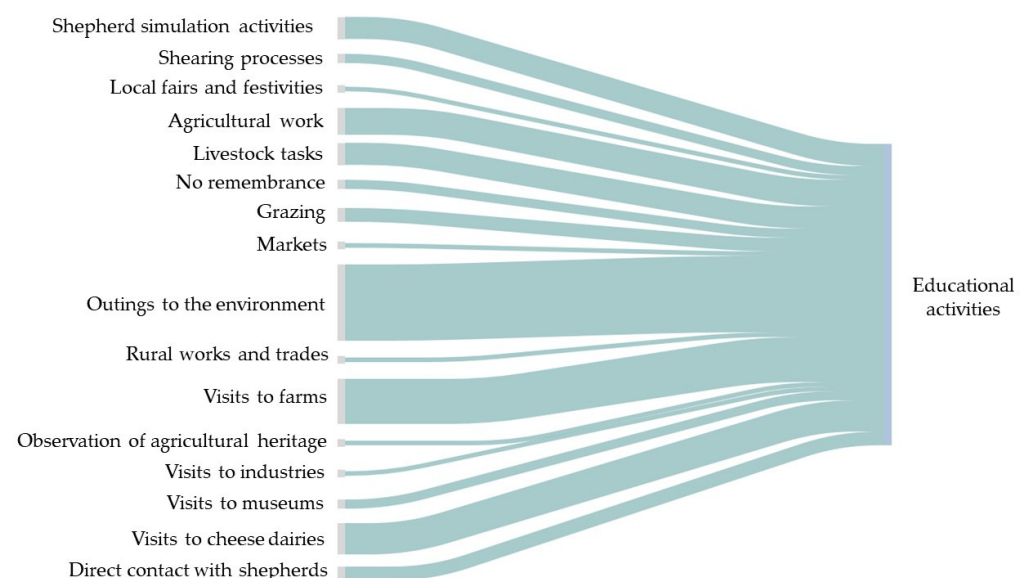
In addition, there was a low level of participation in educational experiences linked to this traditional practice (Table 7). Moreover, this contribution decreased progressively over

time, showing a higher value in the school stage (23.5%), followed by high school (12.3%) and university (2.8%).

**Table 7.** Previous participation in educational activities related to pastoralism.

	No.	I Do Not Know	Yes
At school	47.5%	12.8%	23.5%
At the institute	66%	5.5%	12.3%
At the university	77.8%	3.3%	2.8%

The content analysis shows that the most common educational activities were outings close to the environment, followed by visits to farms and cheese dairies, participation in agricultural work, shepherd simulation activities and accompanying livestock tasks. To a lesser extent, other activities were identified such as direct contact with shepherds, grazing in the dehesa, sheep shearing processes, visits to ethnographic museums, attendance at local fairs and markets, observation of constructions linked to the agricultural heritage and visits to natural resource processing industries such as cork (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Most practiced educational activities.

Thus, a wide variety of educational activities were identified that seek to bring students closer to the rural environment and foster a deeper understanding of traditional agricultural practices. Although the educational outings to the rural environment stand out from the rest, they all involve students and contribute to promoting an appreciation for nature, the conservation of rural heritage and the revaluation of cultural practices rooted in rural communities.

At present, participation in activities aimed at understanding the craft and practice of pastoralism remains low, even among students from rural backgrounds (Table 8).

Most students showed no interest in this practice (34%). However, it is worth noting the significant percentage of students who, although lacking previous experience, showed interest in this experience (27.8%). Therefore, although a considerable part of the new generations show disinterest, there are still opportunities to revalue this practice by promoting and disseminating it among those young people with a greater predisposition.

The results obtained with the chi-square test revealed that there are some cases in which the null hypothesis should be rejected. Specifically, the existence of significant relationships of interdependence between the current frequency of visits to the dehesa and previous participation in pastoral educational activities was corroborated, independently of the educational stage (Table 9).

**Table 8.** Current participation in activities linked to the traditional practice of pastoralism.

	Frequency	%
Do not know/No answer	65	16.3
I have participated in herding activities in the past, but no longer do so.	70	17.5
I have no interest in participating in grazing activities.	136	34.0
I have never participated in herding activities, but I am interested in doing so.	111	27.8
I occasionally participate in grazing activities.	17	4.3
I regularly participate in grazing activities	1	0.3
Total	400	100

**Table 9.** Correlation between participation in activities related to shepherding and frequency of visits to the dehesa.

Participation in related activities with the shepherd's trade during the school period						
		No	I do not know	Yes	Total	
Frequency of visits to dehesa areas	More than five times	N	53	14	33	100
		%	53.0%	14.0%	33.0%	100%
	Less than once a month	N	86	20	30	136
		%	63.2%	14.7%	22.1%	100%
	A couple of times a month	N	51	17	31	99
		%	51.5%	17.2%	31.3%	100%
	Participation in related activities with the profession of shepherd during the secondary school period					
	More than five times	N	77	7	16%	100
		%	77%	7%	16%	100%
	Less than once a month	N	113	8	15	136
		%	83.1%	5.9%	11%	100%
	A couple of times a month	N	74	7	18	99
		%	74.7%	7.1%	18.2%	100%
	Participation in related activities with the office of pastor during college					
More than five times	N	89	7	4	100	
	%	89%	7%	4%	100%	
Less than once a month	N	129	2	5	136	
	%	94.9%	1.5%	3.7%	100%	
A couple of times a month	N	93	4	2	99	
	%	93.9%	4%	2%	100%	

The level of significance obtained with the chi-square test in both cases makes it necessary to consider the alternative hypothesis (Table 10). Specifically, it was observed that those who visit dehesas the least did not participate in any experience related to this practice during primary, secondary and university education.

**Table 10.** Chi-square significance level.

Primary Education		Value	Gl	Asymptotic sign (bilateral)
	Pearson's chi-square	406.081 <sup>a</sup>	9	0
	Likelihood ratio	360.182	9	0
	N of valid cases	400		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 8.29.				
Secondary Education		Value	Gl	Asymptotic sign (bilateral)
	Pearson's chi-square	403.482 <sup>a</sup>	9	0
	Likelihood ratio	357.998	9	0
	N of valid cases	400		
a. 1 cells (6.2%) have an expected frequency of less than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 3.58.				
University		Value	Gl	Asymptotic sign (bilateral)
	Pearson's chi-square	406.546 <sup>a</sup>	9	0
	Likelihood ratio	360.733	9	0
	N of valid cases	400		
a. 8 cells (50.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 1.79.				

### 3.4. Future Exploration

The imaginary and starting situation revealed the lack of familiarity of the students with the dehesa and the traditional shepherd's trade. The lack of attention to rural heritage poses a possible threat to its preservation. For this reason, we explored which methodologies and activities are the most valued, with the purpose of improving the teaching and learning of these realities, as well as to design pedagogies that adapt as well as possible to the interests of both students and other visitors.

The results showed a clear preference for active methodologies, i.e., those that directly involve students and encourage their participation (Table 11).

**Table 11.** Evaluation of educational methodologies for learning about the dehesa and traditional trades.

	Master Class	Direct Experiences Natural Environment with Teacher	Direct Experiences Natural Environment Tourism	Talks with Farmers	Based Learning in Games in the Classroom	Role Playing	Gamification	Technological Resources and Audiovisual	Visits to Centers of Interpretation
Option 1	75	2	6	3	10	13	16	18	7
Option 2	186	12	66	40	84	92	64	118	58
Option 3	327	180	279	195	282	249	312	276	243
Option 4	176	388	436	448	400	380	344	364	436
Option 5	70	850	470	675	445	490	485	375	545
Total	834	1432	1257	1361	1221	1224	1221	1151	1289
N	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335
X̄	2.49	4.27	3.75	4.06	3.64	3.65	3.64	3.44	3.85

The master class registered the lowest average (2.49), significantly lower than the other aspects considered. At the other extreme, direct experiences in the natural environment with the teacher were the strategy most highly valued by the students (4.27), followed by talks with farmers (4.06) and visits to interpretation centers (3.85). These findings suggest that direct interaction with the environment and with the local population itself is a highly valued aspect in the learning process about rural heritage.

However, direct experiences in the natural environment with a tourism company (3.75), role-playing activities (3.65), gamification (3.65), game-based learning in the classroom (3.64) and technological and audiovisual resources (3.44) also registered medium-high scores, so they are also well-valued strategies.

In relation to the activities, students showed interest in most of the proposals, registering medium-high and high averages (Table 12).



Table 12. Valuation of different activities related to dehesa and grazing.

	Observation Flora and Fauna	Hiking Route	Contemplatiof Cultural Heritage	Grazing by the Dehesa	Accompany the Goat Herd during Travels	Feeding of Livestock	Milking	Collection of Wild Products	Craftsmanship of Products	Tasting of Typical Products	Astronomical Observa- tion	Photography	Preparation of Cheeses
OPTION 1	12	13	6	32	50	32	59	23	7	11	10	9	47
OPTION 2	52	40	52	98	106	84	132	80	72	34	60	52	74
OPTION 3	279	216	270	300	303	240	246	267	234	156	168	186	195
OPTION 4	348	324	356	328	248	356	228	328	356	276	408	256	260
OPTION 5	585	745	620	360	345	460	355	505	625	930	685	870	605
TOTAL	1276	1338	1304	1118	1052	1172	1020	1203	1294	1407	1331	1373	1181
	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335	335
	3.81	3.99	3.89	3.34	3.14	3.50	3.04	3.59	3.86	4.20	3.97	4.10	3.53

Specifically, they were more inclined towards tasting typical products (4.20) and taking photographs (4.10). Likewise, they also valued positively the rest of the proposals, showing greater interest towards hiking routes (3.99), astronomical observation (3.97), contemplation of cultural heritage (3.89), handicraft products (3.86), observation of flora and fauna (3.81), gathering wild products (3.59), making cheese (3.53), feeding livestock (3.50), grazing in the dehesa (3.34), accompanying the goat herd (3.14) and milking (3.04). Therefore, there is a great diversity of motivating experiences for students that can be effective in favoring the approach and appreciation of this ancestral practice.

The chi-square analysis showed that in several cases the alternative hypothesis, which rejects the independence of variables, should be accepted. Specifically, dependent relationships were observed between the willingness to participate in rural experiences and the frequency of visits to dehesa (Table 13).

**Table 13.** Evaluation of grazing activities in the dehesa, transtermination and cattle feeding according to the frequency of visits to the dehesa.

		Grazing in the dehesa					
		1	2	3	4	5	
Frequency of visits to dehesa areas	More than five times	N	8	8	36	24	25
		%	7.9%	7.9%	35.6%	23.8%	24.8%
	Less than once a month	N	17	35	38	29	20
		%	12.2%	25.2%	27.3%	20.9%	14.4%
	A couple of times a month	N	7	9	27	29	28
		%	7.0%	9.0%	27.0%	29.0%	28.0%
	Trasterminance						
	More than five times	N	12	11	34	16	28
		%	11.9%	10.9%	33.7%	15.8%	27.7%
	Less than once a month	N	24	29	45	26	15
		%	17.3%	20.9%	32.4%	18.7%	10.8%
	A couple of times a month	N	14	15	25	20	26
		%	14.0%	15.0%	25.0%	20.0%	26.0%
	Cattle feeding						
	More than five times	N	9	10	19	29	34
		%	8.9%	9.9%	18.8%	28.7%	33.7%
	Less than once a month	N	15	29	32	36	27
		%	10.8%	20.9%	23.0%	25.9%	19.4%
	A couple of times a month	N	8	5	30	24	33
		%	8.0%	5.0%	30.0%	24.0%	33.0%

The significance levels obtained in the case of dehesa grazing (0.001), transtermination (0.026) and cattle feeding (0.005) made it necessary to consider the alternative hypothesis (Table 14). Therefore, a greater willingness to participate in rural experiences was observed among those who visit the dehesas the least.

**Table 14.** Chi-square significance level.

		Value	gl	Asymptotic sign (bilateral)
<b>Grazing</b>	Pearson's chi-square	26.143 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.001
	Likelihood ratio	26.024	8	0.001
	N of valid cases	340		
	a. 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 9.41.			
		Value	gl	Asymptotic sign (bilateral)
<b>Trasterminance</b>	Pearson's chi-square	17.438 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.026
	Likelihood ratio	18.449	8	0.018
	N of valid cases	340		
	a. 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 14.71.			
		Value	gl	Asymptotic sign (bilateral)
<b>Livestock feed</b>	Pearson's chi-square	21.750 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.005
	Likelihood ratio	22.457	8	0.004
	N of valid cases	340		
	a. 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 9.41.			

### 3.5. Solutions

There is currently a worrying decline in traditional occupations in the dehesa, with grazing and transhumance being particularly affected by this trend. Their disappearance not only represents the loss of ancestral practices rooted in the history and identity of rural communities, but also poses major problems in terms of environmental conservation, the preservation of biodiversity and the abandonment of the rural environment.

Given this panorama, it is crucial to explore possible strategies to revitalize and preserve the traditional trades that have characterized life in the dehesa for centuries. According to the results, most of the measures proposed were highly valued by the students, with financial support standing out from the rest (4.12) (Table 15).

**Table 15.** Evaluation of measures to preserve traditional trades.

	Educational Programs and Awareness-Raising	Financial Support	Programs for Responsible Tourism	Increase in the Dissemination of Traditional Crafts	Development of Local Markets	Networking between Institutions	Recognition of the Estate Intangible
OPTION 1	2	4	9	3	8	5	9
OPTION 2	54	46	86	62	40	48	44
OPTION 3	288	189	279	243	225	243	246
OPTION 4	420	336	388	384	420	456	376
OPTION 5	510	805	465	615	630	545	620
TOTAL	1274	1,380	1227	1307	1323	1297	1295
N	332	335	335	334	334	333	331
$\bar{X}$	3.84	4.12	3.66	3.91	3.96	3.89	3.91

While financial support is essential to ensure the economic viability of traditional practices, the importance of developing local markets (3.96), recognizing the importance of intangible heritage (3.91), increasing its dissemination (3.91), networking among different institutions (3.89), developing educational and awareness programs (3.84) and creating responsible tourism programs (3.66) were also highlighted.

## 4. Discussion

The knowledge and understanding of heritage and its environment is the first step to value it and become involved in its conservation [82–84]. However, it has been shown that

university students present limitations in their knowledge and perception of the dehesa, regardless of their gender or origin. They have problems in discerning whether it is a natural or a transformed landscape, which shows a lack of basic knowledge about this landscape. This fact is especially relevant, considering that they come from a region where the dehesa has had an economic, social and cultural significance since historical times.

In addition, they mainly recognize the economic functionality of the dehesa, while its diversity of functions, mainly its social relevance, are underestimated. These results coincide with other studies which state that, in spite of the multifunctional character of the dehesa, society conceives these spaces as places destined mainly for production [85]. These findings reflect a lack of comprehensive understanding of the dehesa and reveal the need to promote a more complete knowledge of its diversity of social, cultural, educational and environmental functions [2,11,15,16,37,86,87].

This situation changed when analyzing the students' recognition of pastoralism. They mainly valued the socio-cultural dimension of this ancestral practice. This fact demonstrates the relevance of projecting traditional trades to value the social and cultural dimension of the dehesa, and thus promote a more complete and sustainable perspective of this important system.

By showing traditional trades, such as shepherding, the importance of human relationships with the environment is highlighted and the rich cultural history and the great identity value rooted in these practices are recognized [20,35,37]. Furthermore, despite the fact that there are few studies that value the intangible heritage of the dehesa as a priority [1], the literature insists on the importance of considering the customs and traditions as a means to help the sustainable development of rural areas [44].

Another one of the main results of this study confirmed that the students hardly frequent the dehesas at present and have not participated in on-site educational experiences linked to pastoralism, despite coming from an environment completely dominated by this landscape and being one of the few places that still preserves this ancestral practice. This lack of approach limits their understanding and appreciation of this unique environment and the richness of its natural and cultural heritage.

In addition, it was found that this low frequency of visits to the dehesa may be related to the scarce previous exposure to educational activities that allow students to learn about the traditions and trades that have characterized life in this environment. This fact suggests the need to promote experiences that allow contact with the intangible heritage [26], applied to the different educational levels [35] and that jointly involve actors from formal, non-formal and informal environments [84,88,89].

These experiential activities in the environment can significantly enrich students' understanding of the cultural, economic and environmental importance of the dehesa [90]. Also, by fostering a deeper connection with the natural environment, these initiatives can inspire a greater sense of responsibility and care for the conservation of these valuable landscapes [59–63].

The literature conceives agricultural landscapes as true paradises for tourism practices, as well as for the realization of outdoor educational activities [64], especially in those rural environments that still preserve their ancestral traditions, as is the case of the Extremadura region. For this reason, this study analyzed which teaching methods and activities are most appreciated by students, to improve the quality of educational and tourism projects developed around the dehesa.

This study revealed that the most valued teaching methodologies and activities are those that directly involve students and promote direct visits to the natural environment [35,41,62,63,91,92]. Specifically, the results showed a vivid interest in experiencing the gastronomic culture, which reveals the importance of sensory experiences in the appreciation and understanding of the rural environment and its traditions [49,52,93–95].

This particular interest in gastronomic tasting is in line with the contributions of other studies [96–98] which recognize the significant influence of traditional products or products with Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) or Protected Geographical Indications (PGI)



in the choice of tourist destinations. Together with the sensory experience provided by products with quality indications, they allow learning about the local management systems traditionally rooted and shaped as components of the human heritage [99].

Nevertheless, all the proposals put forward in this study linked to the practice of grazing assumed a good valuation, as was the case in other studies [49]. This fact reveals that the students are interested in this practice, even though they have hardly participated in experiences related to it. The activities linked to the shepherding profession offer the visitor the possibility of accompanying herds in their seasonal movements and participating in the auxiliary tasks of livestock farming, such as cattle feeding, cheese production or wool handicrafts. It is also possible to take tours and recreational–cultural routes along the cattle trails and their associated infrastructure [35].

Tourism based on traditional trades allows visitors to get involved in the day-to-day workings of farms and livestock farms, as well as to learn about traditional practices and the sustainable management of natural resources [38,44,100–102]. At the same time, this direct interaction with the rural environment contributes to educate and raise awareness about the cultural and environmental importance of preserving traditional practices, as a part of the intangible heritage [54,103].

Finally, this study identified various proposals for the future to counteract the crisis experienced by traditional trades, as a reflection of rural abandonment. In addition, it is particularly important to know the opinion of university students in this aspect, since they represent a generation capable of actively participating in the improvement and protection of their socio-cultural environment [84,104,105].

The strategies identified include financial support [106], fostering local markets [35], increasing the dissemination of intangible heritage [19], promoting networking among institutions [107] and designing education and awareness-raising programs [84], as well as responsible tourism [86,108] to promote an ethical and environmentally friendly experience. These measures are essential to preserve and revitalize the valuable cultural legacies of rural communities in an increasingly globalized world.

This research can be considered to better plan the design and creation of educational tourism policies and products based on intangible heritage. This is of the utmost importance to raise awareness among new generations, in a context where the preservation of traditional trades and the rural environment itself is facing great challenges.

The promotion of educational tourism activities is especially important in the Extremadura region, which still preserves some of the trades that are in danger of disappearing and has a wide extension of *dehesa*, with an exclusive and deep cultural value. This environmental and cultural richness makes it possible to offer an authentic and transforming experience.

It can also be useful in adapting teaching strategies and activities to the students' level of knowledge and experiences, helping to ensure the success of the educational experience. By considering the particularities and interests of students, educators can design more effective programs that encourage greater learner participation, visits to the local environment, and promote links to intangible heritage. The findings can therefore contribute to rethinking the educational curriculum, as they provide information about students' motivations, experiences and knowledge gaps in relation to the landscape and local culture.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results. Firstly, the cross-sectional design used involved the collection of data at a single point in time, which precluded establishing possible changes in participants' perceptions and experiences over time. Another important limitation is that the sampling method used was non-probability convenience sampling, which may lead to selection biases, as certain groups of the student population with different and novel perspectives may have been excluded.

Thus, although the results achieved are promising, future research that expands the boundaries of the study and considers more diverse and representative samples is essential.

It would also be beneficial to develop intervention studies that evaluate in more detail the influence of educational tourism experiences in dehesa environments.

In addition, the analyses conducted suggest the importance of continuing to explore in future work the socio-environmental context, the frequency of visits to the nearby environment and participation in previous educational activities, as influential variables in the understanding and appreciation of traditional practices.

These future lines of work will provide a more solid basis for implementing more effective policies and practices in tourism and education, aimed at the valuation and conservation of heritage in natural areas.

## 5. Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study on the valuation of the dehesas and the traditional profession of shepherd:

- Firstly, there is a lack of understanding among university students about the dehesa, both of its conception as a transformed landscape and of the variety of uses and exploitations it offers. Therefore, we conclude that there is a need to promote a more comprehensive knowledge of the multifunctional nature of this landscape. This can be achieved by integrating traditional trades into the study of dehesa landscapes, which have been shown to be relevant for identifying the social dimension of this agrosystem.
- Secondly, it is evident that the students hardly visit the dehesas and have participated in few in situ educational experiences related to pastoralism. Despite coming from an environment characterized by this landscape and being one of the few places that still preserves this ancestral practice, the opportunities of the dehesa to promote enriching educational experiences are not taken advantage of. This fact suggests the need to promote experiences that allow us to appreciate the natural and cultural heritage of the dehesa and, consequently, contribute to its conservation.
- Thirdly, it was observed that the methodologies and activities best valued by students are those that involve a direct visit to the natural environment and that offer a sensory experience.
- Fourth, various useful proposals for the future were identified to help reverse the situation of vulnerability of the traditional trades and the dehesa landscape in general. These range from financial support to the promotion of educational plans and responsible tourism.
- Fifth, and finally, it revealed the importance of introducing variables such as the background environment, frequency of visits to the immediate environment and participation in previous educational activities, given their influence on the understanding and appreciation of traditional practices. This finding also reveals the importance of considering the individual context of each student when designing educational programs related to learning about local traditions.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Survey.

Genre	Male/Female/Other
Age	18–29/Other
Degree awarded	Bachelor’s Degree in Primary Education, Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education, Master’s Degree in Anthropology, Master’s Degree in Geographic Information Systems and Master’s Degree in Teacher Training in Education.
Place of residence of the family nucleus	Extremadura/Other different Autonomous Community/Outside Spain
Municipality of residence in the case of Extremadura	
Economic sector in which parents or guardians work	
Three dehesa concepts	
Three traditional trades	
Definition of dehesa	A system of agricultural use with monocultures of cereals and vegetables/A system of extensive livestock use, dominated by pig farming/A system of forestry use, mainly for the production of wood and charcoal/An untransformed natural environment, characterized by the absence of human intervention in the management of the landscape/An agricultural landscape transformed by man, combining dehesas, trees and extensive livestock activities.
Valuation of dehesa	Ecosystem/Economic Structure/Social Structure/Cultural Structure/Educational Structure
Function of grazing	Economic/Emotional/Historical/Sense of belonging/Sense of identity/Environmental/Educational/Educational resource/Leisure and festivities/Promotion of rural areas
Measures for the preservation of grazing	Educational and awareness programs/Financial support/Responsible tourism programs/Dissemination of traditional trades/Local markets/Networking/Non-intangible heritage valorization
Frequency of visits to dehesas	Every day/Several times a week/Once a week/Couple of times a month/Less than once a month
Participation in educational activities on pastoralism	At school At the institute At the University
In what activities?	

Table A1. Cont.

Level of participation in grazing activities	Regularly/Occasionally/I have participated, but no longer/I have never participated but am interested/I have no interest.
Most appropriate methodologies for the teaching and learning of contents related to the dehesa and the shepherd's trade.	Master class/Experiences in the natural environment with a teacher/Experiences in the natural environment with a tourism company/Talks with livestock farmers/Game-based learning in the classroom/Role Playing/Gamification/Technological and audiovisual resources/Visits to interpretation centers.
Preference of activities	Flora and fauna observation/Hiking/Cultural heritage contemplation/Pastoralism/Trashumancia/Livestock feeding/Milking/Gathering wild products/Craftsmanship/Gastronomic tasting/Astronomic observation/Photography/Cheese production

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