

Does presence on the UNESCO World Heritage List Support Sustainable Development? A Market-Driven Exploratory Approach

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Abstract

Noting the increasing threats at the address to the cultural and natural heritage and considering their deterioration or disappearing a harmful impoverishment of all the nations, UNESCO adopted fifty years ago, at its 17th General Conference held in Paris, the Convention concerning the protection of the cultural and natural heritage aiming to safeguard it as part of the world's heritage of mankind as a whole.

One of its provisions, the inscription on the World Heritage List, has rapidly evolved from recognizing the outstanding universal value to supporting the promotion and capitalization of the heritage sites and their areas by attracting domestic and international visitors interested to discover, explore, enjoy, and engage the cultural heritage, generating the financial resources and creating workplaces to support the social and economic growth.

Discussing the impact of presence on the World Heritage List of cultural sites and acknowledging the key role of cultural tourism in the capitalization of cultural heritage, the paper assesses the relationships between the inscription on the List and the sustainable development in terms of the number of incoming tourists, revenues generated from tourism, and the number of the workplaces created in the travel and tourism industry for a group of selected countries.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, World heritage list, UNESCO, Cultural marketing, Sustainable development

1. Introduction

When, in November 1972, the Convention concerning the protection of the cultural and natural heritage was adopted, UNESCO had the intention to create the institutional framework, acknowledged by a continuously increasing number of States, defining the content of cultural and natural heritage, and ensuring its appropriate safeguarding. The emphasis was placed on the heritage of outstanding and universal value deserving appropriate recognition and protection. The ideas of promotion and capitalization of the cultural heritage emerged later as a result of observing that designation and inclusion in the World Heritage List represents a solid base for drawing attention, raising interest, generating desire, and finally indulging action of the public in connection to the cultural heritage.

Aiming to explain exhaustively the object of the Convention, UNESCO (1972) has defined the cultural heritage as including: monuments – architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings, and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; groups of buildings – groups of separate

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or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; sites – works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

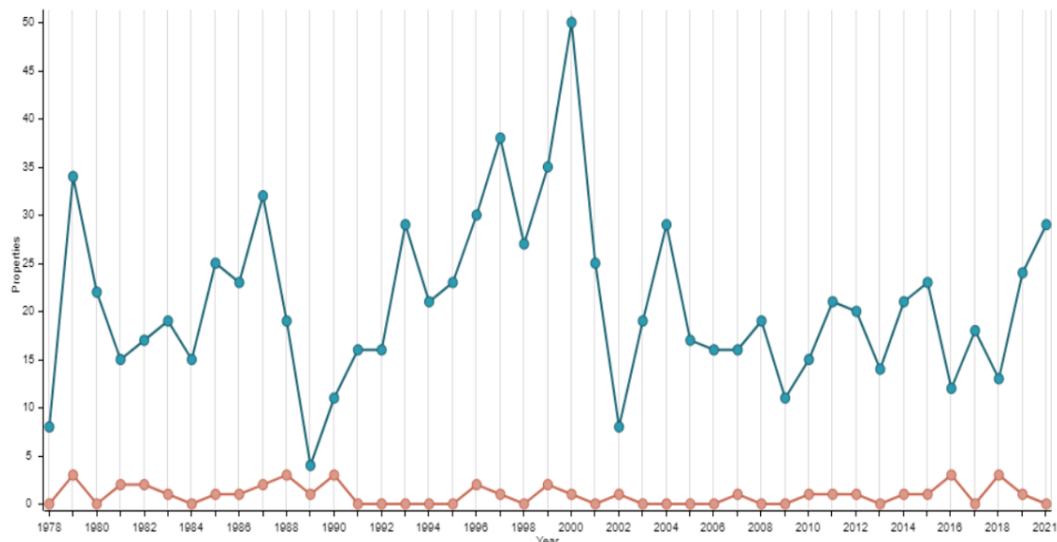
Article 11 (2) of the Convention (UNESCO, 1972) has established the World Heritage List including properties forming part of the cultural heritage and natural heritage, as described in Article 1, considered to have an outstanding universal value in terms of the specific criteria, to be updated and published at least every two years. Complementarily, as an expression of concern for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage, Article 11 (4) of the Convention (UNESCO, 1972) has established the List of the World Heritage in Danger including properties forming part of the cultural heritage threatened by serious and specific human, natural, or unknown dangers, and for which major operations of preservation are necessary, to be updated and published whenever circumstances require. The area of the cultural heritage protection has been extended by including, besides the tangible (monuments, group of buildings, and sites), the intangible components of the cultural heritage. According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003),

intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage transmitted from generation to generation, constantly recreated in response to their environment, interaction with nature and history, and providing a sense of identity and continuity and promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. The Convention has taken into consideration solely the intangible cultural heritage compatible with existing international human rights instruments, the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups, and individuals, and sustainable development.

As in the case of the 1972 Convention, the 2003 Convention has established (Article 16) a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity to be drawn up based on specific criteria, updated, and published, as well as a List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (Article 17).

The transition from the Convention's issuing to its implementation has lasted five years, with the first eight cultural World Heritage sites (together with four natural sites) being enlisted in 1978: Aachen Cathedral (Germany), City of Quito (Ecuador), Historic Centre of Kraków (Poland), Island of Gorée (Senegal), L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site (Canada), Mesa Verde National Park (USA), Rock-Hewn Churches Lalibela (Ethiopia), and Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines (Poland). Since then, as Elliott and Schmutz (2012) have observed the enlisting of cultural, natural, and mixed sites on the World Heritage List has become a highly complex process encompassing the efforts of specialized organizations, scientific experts, activists, and government officials at both local and global level generating a tremendous, diversified, and, sometimes, controversial increase of the number of the enlisted properties. Adie (2017) has remarked the commercial dimension of signing the Convention and nominating sites to the World Heritage List due mainly to the contributions and royalty fees to be paid by the State Parties

from the profits generated as a result of the employment of the World Heritage emblem.



Notes: ● Cultural; ● Mixed. Data and graphics source: UNESCO World Heritage Convention (2022).
 Figure 1. Number of cultural and mixed World Heritage properties inscribed in the World Heritage List between 1978 and 2021

Between 1978 and 2021, the average number of cultural World Heritage sites enlisted in the World Heritage List has fluctuated significantly between the minimum values of four (registered in 1989), and eight (1978 and 2002), respectively a maximum value of 50 (2000), corresponding to an annual average value of around 21 cultural sites. The number of mixed World Heritage sites enlisted in the same period has fluctuated between none - there were 19 years in which no mixed sites were enlisted - and the maximum value of three (1979, 1988, 1990, 2016, and 2018), corresponding to an annual average value of around one mixed site. During this period, the cultural World Heritage sites have represented the most important category weighting for around 77 % of the total number of the enlisted sites, adding the mixed sites increasing the weight by 4 % to around 81 %. As in the case of the number, the weight of the cultural and mixed World Heritage sites has largely fluctuated between 1978 and 2021 from 57.14 (1989 and 2016) to 95.83 % (2015) - in the case of the cultural sites, respectively from zero to 18.75 % (1990) - in the case of the mixed sites (UNESCO, 2022a).

The implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage started after four years with the enlisting, in 2008, with an impressive number of 90 objects of intangible cultural heritage expressions from 70 countries and continued next year with the same intensity (85 objects from 32 countries). Until the end of 2021, the number of enlisted objects of intangible cultural heritage and expressions has reached 629 from 140 countries fluctuating from a year to another between 28 (2015) and 47 (2010 and 2021), corresponding to a remarkable annual average of 45 enlisted objects, significantly higher by comparison to those of the total (27), cultural (21 sites), and mixed (1) heritage

sites (UNESCO, 2022b).

The main reason standing behind the UNESCO approach to protecting and safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage was the concern for preserving this outstanding heritage for future generations. Maybe anticipating the future employment of the designation and inclusion in the World Heritage List as a tool to promote and capitalize the cultural heritage, UNESCO has included a true disclaimer in the 1972's convention specifying, in Article 12, that the fact that a property belonging to the cultural or natural heritage has not been included in World Heritage Lists “shall in no way be construed to mean that it does not have an outstanding universal value for purposes other than those resulting from inclusion in these lists”.

By this mention, UNESCO has also opened the debate on whether enlisting in the World Heritage List may contribute to the development of tourism and, further, to supporting the local communities and countries to develop sustainably. In their investigation of the perceptions, meanings, and conceptualizations related to the designation as World Heritage sites, Poria et al. (2013) have found that for visitors it is very important that heritage should be relevant to the human culture (a perception congruent with the UNESCO vision), and have challenged the advantages potentially associated with the designation as a marketing resource identifying both positive (interest in the authentic on-site experiences) and negative (avoiding the more crowded and expensive sites) effects. Later, approaching the effect of the inscription on the World Heritage List over tourism, Yang et al. (2019) have identified a multitude of inter-related variables that influence more or less significantly the impact of World Heritage site designation and including on the List over the tourism in the recent years, particularly in the developing countries.

The pessimistic or even doubtful vision regarding the effects generated by the inclusion of cultural sites in the UNESCO World Heritage List has been formulated by Cellini (2011) who argued that the available empirical evidence documents that the effects in terms of attracting tourism flows and hence fostering local economic growth are rather unclear in the absence of robust econometric results. Based on the results obtained researching the same subject in the particular context of the Historic Centre of Macau, Huang et al. (2012) have found that, despite the common belief that enlisting attracts more tourists and of the adoption of the UNESCO recognition as a marketing tool, there are no significant effects besides a possible short-run tourism-enhancing impact. Investigating the inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List at the level of prefectural cities in China, Gao and Su (2019) have concluded that enlisting acknowledges the outstanding value of the cultural and natural properties but has no significant effects on tourist arrivals and tourism revenues.

On the other hand, other research suggests that designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site and inclusion in the World Heritage List have generated positive effects. Using dynamic econometric techniques, Canale et al. (2019) have found a positive and significant relationship between international tourism flows and the number of heritage sites inscribed in the UNESCO list observing empirically the contribution of the local economic well-being, environmental concerns, and the market openness to attracting an increasing number of tourists. Assessing the tourism demand for the case of Spain, Castillo-Manzano et al. (2021) have identified a positive and significant relationship between the cultural offer (cultural sites enlisted and the number of museums) and the overall tourist demand, significantly stronger in the case of international tourism, underlining the key role of the

UNESCO World Heritage brand as a driver of the tourism attractiveness. Hosseini et al. (2021) have reconfirmed that inclusion in the World Heritage List positively can be used as a promotional tool to attract tourists recommending increasing the number of enlisted properties and the nominated sites in the tentative lists, and employing effective strategies to persuade UNESCO World Heritage Committee about the value, integrity, and authenticity of these sites.

As the viewpoints regarding the subject remain divided it is essential to admit, based on the five decades of experiences related to the functioning of the UNESCO Convention, that designation as a World Heritage site and inclusion in the dedicated List generate at least four effects: cultural recognition, the obligation to preserve, need for the site promotion, and site management focusing on safeguarding and maintenance (Santa-Cruz and López-Guzmán, 2017), that may contribute to the increase of the number of the visiting tourists which may bring into attention the need to balance sustainably the economic benefits and the potential negative impact over the state of the heritage, particularly in the communities economically and socially vulnerable (Caust and Vecco, 2017).

The relationships between the designation as a World Heritage Site and the sustainable development seen as an output of the inclusion in the World Heritage List are also under debate. Discussions begin with the most frequently mentioned definition given to sustainable development viewed as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987), and the conclusions are far from substantiated a clear connection.

Conducting research at the level of 45 World Heritage sites in China, Wang et al. (2021) have found that proper ecological protection of the heritage sites enhance their contribution to sustainable development by creating a positive image that increases the number of visitors and, as a consequence, the revenues of the local entrepreneurs and communities, from which a part can be allocated for the heritage sites management and conservation. Hosseini et al. (2021) suggested the involvement of UNESCO and advanced member states in assisting developing countries to meet the sustainable development objectives related to the creation of sustainable cities and communities, peace, justice, strong institutions, and partnership for the goals. Researching the relationships between cultural heritage and the seventeen sustainable development goals, Luo et al. (2022) have concluded that cultural heritage sites provide the cultural and historical references for a harmonious development of man and nature contributing to reaching the six sustainable development goals: 1 – No Poverty, 2 – Zero Hunger, 3 – Good Health and Well-being, 11 – Sustainable cities and communities, 14 – Life below water, and 15 – Life on land. There are hopes that, besides the economic, social, and environmental dimensions, culture will become a fourth pillar of sustainable development and culturally sustainable development will encompass all the meanings and interactions with the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of human life (Sabatini, 2019).

Exploring the connections between the designation as a World Heritage site and corresponding inclusion in the World Heritage List with the travel and tourism industry and sustainable development represents the overall scope of this research approach.

2. Methodological notes

To assess the relationships between the presence in the UNESCO World Heritage List and sustainable development a set of seven basic indicators have been considered:

1. WHS: Number of cultural World Heritage sites included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2021;
2. OIHE: Number of oral and intangible cultural heritage practices and expressions registered on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2021;
3. CEDD: Cultural and Entertainment tourism Digital Demand in 2021 expressing the total online search volume related to the different culture and entertainment-related brand tags, provided by Bloom Consulting and D2 – Digital Demand;
4. Value of the International Tourist Arrivals (thousands) in 2021 provided by the World Travel Organization, UNWTO Database;
5. Value of the International Tourist Receipts (inbound US\$, millions) in 2021 provided by the World Travel & Tourism Council, Travel & Tourism Economic Research Impact 2021;
6. Travel & Tourism industry contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (US\$ millions) in 2021, provided by the World Travel & Tourism Council, Travel & Tourism Economic Research Impact 2021;
7. Travel & Tourism industry employment (thousand jobs) in 2021, provided by the World Travel & Tourism Council, Travel & Tourism Economic Research Impact 2021.

The selection of the indicators has taken into consideration the overall assumption that **cultural heritage** (described by the number of cultural World Heritage sites, respectively, and the number of oral and intangible cultural heritage practices and expressions included in the specific Lists) can represent a consistent resource which promoted and capitalized by the **travel and tourism industry** (particularly through cultural tourism attracting tourists and generating revenues) may support the **sustainable development of a country** (by contributing to the gross domestic product formation and employment).

All data regarding the above-mentioned indicators at the level of 116 countries were extracted from the database of the World Economic Forum (2021) report on the Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021. Pearson correlation coefficients and coefficients of determination have been calculated using JASP, an open-source project supported by the University of Amsterdam, and employed to assess the relationships between the variables describing cultural heritage, travel and tourism, and sustainable development.

3. Main findings

As of 2021, an average of seven World Heritage sites and five or six intangible heritage practices and expressions were enlisted in the World Heritage List and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. An average number of 5571164 international tourists have visited a certain destination from abroad generating an average receipt of 4.558 US\$ billion. The average contribution of the travel and tourism industry to the Gross Domestic Product at the level of certain destinations was, an average, of 11.339 US\$ billion, while the total employment in the travel and tourism industry in a certain destination was 766263 employees.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics regarding the cultural heritage, travel and tourism industry, and contribution to sustainable development (2021)

	WHS	OIHE	ITA	ITR	T&TGDP	T&TEMP
Valid	116	116	116	116	116	116
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	7.086	5.319	5571.164	4558.339	11339.655	766.263
Std. Deviation	10.162	6.398	11596.190	9222.153	37863.574	2592.974
Minimum	0	0	28.732	4.840	27.988	10.315
Maximum	53	42	89400.000	76127.000	356153.000	22798.615

Notes: WHS – the number of World Heritage Sites; OIHE – the number of Oral and Intangible Heritage Expressions, ITA – International Tourism Arrivals; ITR – International Tourism Receipts; T&T GDP – contribution of the Travel & Tourism industry to the Gross Domestic Product formation; T&T Emp – contribution of the Travel & Tourism industry to the creation of Employment.

Data in Table 2 indicate statistically significant associations between all the variables describing the content of the cultural heritage, travel and tourism industry, and sustainable development substantiating the overall assumption that cultural heritage can represent a consistent resource promoted and capitalized by the travel and tourism industry may support the sustainable development of a country.

Table 2. Associations between the basic indicators related to the cultural heritage, travel and tourism industry, and contribution to sustainable development (2021)

Variable	WHS	OIHE	CEDD	ITA	ITR	T&TGDP	T&TEmp
1. WHS	Pearson's r —						
	p-value —						
2. OIHE	Pearson's r 0.586 ***	—					
	p-value < .001	—					
3. CEDD	Pearson's r 0.838 ***	0.527 ***	—				
	p-value < .001	< .001	—				
5. ITA	Pearson's r 0.718 ***	0.565 ***	0.584 ***	—			
	p-value < .001	< .001	< .001	—			
6. ITR	Pearson's r 0.517 ***	0.236 *	0.539 ***	0.533 ***	—		
	p-value < .001	0.011	< .001	< .001	—		
7. T&TGDP	Pearson's r 0.436 ***	0.271 **	0.487 ***	0.464 ***	0.839 ***	—	
	p-value < .001	0.003	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
8. T&TEmp	Pearson's r 0.482 ***	0.542 ***	0.409 ***	0.541 ***	0.297 ***	0.511 **	—
	p-value < .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.001	< .001	—

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Notes: WHS – the number of World Heritage Sites; OIHE – the number of Oral and Intangible Heritage Expressions; CEDD – Cultural and Entertainment tourism Digital Demand; ITA – International Tourism Arrivals; ITR – International Tourism Receipts; T&T GDP – contribution of the Travel & Tourism industry to the Gross Domestic Product formation; T&T Emp – contribution of the Travel & Tourism industry to the creation of Employment.

Approaching the connections between cultural heritage and the travel and tourism industry, data reveal a statistically significant association between the number of World Heritage sites and the international tourist arrivals at the level of the investigated countries confirming that a higher number of World Heritage sites generates a corresponding increase in the number of international tourists visiting the destinations where these are located. More, the number of World Heritage sites appears as the main determinant of international tourist arrivals ($R^2=0.5155$), with more than half of the international tourists being attracted mostly by the outstanding universal value of the cultural heritage sites. The inscription of a cultural heritage site in the World Heritage List tends to drive the flow of international tourists to the places where these sites are located with a direct impact on the attractiveness and performances of the tourist destination. Thus, the cultural heritage recognized as being of outstanding value acts as a determinant of cultural tourism and, consequently, of the travel and tourism industry development.

Data reveal a similar statistically significant association but of an average intensity between the number of oral and intangible heritage practices and expressions and the international tourist arrivals at the level of the investigated countries confirming that, generally, a higher number of oral and intangible heritage practices expressions generates a corresponding increase in the number of international tourists visiting the destinations they are associated with. The number of oral and intangible heritage practices and expressions appears as an important determinant of international tourist receipts ($R^2=0.3192$), with almost one-third of international tourists being attracted by the outstanding value of the intangible cultural heritage. Thus, the inscription of the oral and intangible cultural heritage practices and expressions tends to orientate the flow of international tourists also generating a relevant impact on the attractiveness and performances of the tourist destinations. As in the case of the tangible cultural heritage, the intangible cultural heritage acknowledged as of outstanding value acts as a determinant of the cultural tourism growth and of the travel and tourism industry development.

Data also reveal a statistically significant association, although of average intensity, between the number of World Heritage sites and the international tourist receipts at the level of the investigated countries confirming that a higher number of enlisted World Heritage sites generates a corresponding increase in the amount of money spent by the international tourists with a direct impact over the revenues in the destinations where they are located. The number of World Heritage sites appears as an important determinant of international tourist receipts ($R^2=0.2672$), slightly more than a quarter of the receipts being determined by the outstanding value of the cultural heritage sites. Thus, the inscription in the World Heritage List seems to contribute to the capacity of the tourist destination to generate revenues from the acknowledged outstanding universal value of the cultural heritage acting as a determinant of the incomes obtained from cultural tourism, respectively by the travel and tourism industry.

Similarly, the data also reveal a statistically significant association, although of modest intensity, between the number of oral and intangible heritage practices and expressions and the international tourist receipts at the level of the investigated countries confirming that a higher number of enlisted intangible heritage generates an increase in the amount of money spent by the tourists experiencing the destinations they are associated with. The number of intangible heritage practices and expressions has a rather limited contribution

to the international tourist receipts ($R^2=0.0556$), slightly more than a 5 % of the receipts being determined by the acknowledged value of the intangible cultural heritage. The contribution of the intangible cultural heritage to the cultural tourism receipts and, as a result, of the travel and tourism industry development is rather modest.

The connections between the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the travel and tourism industry-related variables provide a rather microeconomic perspective focusing on the behavior of the cultural tourists seen as consumers of cultural heritage having as results, on a hand, arrivals in the places where cultural heritage sites, respectively oral and intangible heritage practices, and expressions are to be found, and, on the other hand, generating revenues related to the discovering, exploring, experiencing, and enjoying the richness of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Yet, the capitalization of the cultural heritage of outstanding universal value is expected to generate a significant impact also from a macroeconomic level.

Data reveal a statistically significant association of an average intensity between the number of World Heritage sites and the contribution of the travel and tourism industry to the formation of the Gross Domestic Product at the level of the investigated countries confirming the assumption that a higher number of enlisted World Heritage sites induces a corresponding increase in the travel and tourism industry contributes to the Gross Domestic Product in the countries where they are located. The portfolio of the World Heritage sites appears as an important sponsor of the travel and tourism industry's contribution to the gross domestic product ($R^2=0.1900$), providing almost a fifth of the overall contribution. Revenues generated as a result of the cultural heritage consumers' experiences contribute to the overall incomes obtained by the tourist destinations and support their economic development by covering the expenses of the cultural heritage operators and providing the financial resources for both the proper preservation and maintenance of this heritage, as well as for its appropriate marketing.

Data also reveal a statistically significant, yet of rather poor intensity, between the number of oral and intangible heritage practices and expressions and the contribution of the travel and tourism industry to the formation of the Gross Domestic Product at the level of the investigated countries. Thus, it is confirmed the assumption that a higher number of oral and intangible heritage expressions registered generates a corresponding increase in the travel and tourism industry's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of the destinations they are associated with. The amount of enlisted intangible heritage practices and expressions appear as a peripheral sponsor of the travel and tourism industry's contribution to the gross domestic product ($R^2=0.0734$), providing less than one-tenth of the overall contribution. Still, as in the case of the World Heritage sites, the revenues generated as a result of the cultural heritage consumers' experiences in connection to the intangible heritage expressions represent a source of supplementary incomes at the level of the tourist destinations and a basis for their economic development covering the expenses of the cultural heritage operators and providing the financial resources for both the proper preservation and maintenance of this heritage and its appropriate marketing.

Data reveal a statistically significant association but of an average intensity between the number of World Heritage sites and the contribution of the travel and tourism industry to employment at the level of the investigated countries confirming that a higher number of enlisted World Heritage sites supports an increase in the number of workplaces created in

the destinations where they are located. Almost a quarter of the workplaces created by the travel and tourism industry ($R^2=0.2323$) appear to be the result of enlisting the World Heritage sites positioning the cultural heritage as a relevant contributor to the overall social and economic development generating workplaces in the areas of preservation, maintenance, promotion, and capitalization of the cultural heritage at the level of the related tourist destinations.

Similarly, data reveal a statistically significant but average intensity association between the number of oral and intangible heritage practices and expressions and the contribution of the travel and tourism industry to employment at the level of the investigated countries confirming that a higher enlisted number of intangible cultural heritage generates a corresponding increase (slightly higher by comparison to that determined by the cultural heritage sites), in the number of workplaces created by the travel and tourism industry in the destinations they are associated with. Slightly more than a quarter of the workplaces created by the travel and tourism industry ($R^2=0.2612$) appear to be the result of enlisting the intangible cultural heritage positioning it as a contributor of the same relevance regarding the overall social and economic development by generating workplaces related to the intangible cultural heritage in the tourist destinations where it is located.

4. Conclusions and limits of the research

The statistically significant associations between the variables describing the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the international tourist arrivals should be seen beyond the quantitative connection between the number of World Heritage sites, practices, and expressions and the number of international tourists attracted by this heritage. What matters is not only the recognition of the outstanding universal value, but how it is marketed among the visitors potentially interested to discover, exploring, experiencing, and enjoying this heritage. Communication plays an initially essential role as the main objectives to be reached are to address, inform, and convince the visitors to get in touch with this heritage. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicates a statistically significant association of an average intensity between the communication (represented in the context of this research by the cultural and entertainment tourism digital demand) and the international tourist arrivals while the coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.3410$) explains its magnitude. Although it may sound cold and cynical, “no customers, no business” applies even in the case of cultural heritage, and even its owners and managers must communicate to promote the cultural heritage among the potential audiences.

Moreover, the statistically significant associations between the variables describing the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the international tourist receipts, although not at the same level of intensity, should be seen from a qualitative perspective accompanying the quantitative connection between the number of World Heritage sites, practices and expressions and the number of international tourists attracted by this heritage. After communicating with the potential visitors regarding the outstanding universal value of the heritage, its owners and managers of this heritage must focus on the particular ways of transforming this heritage into a generator of memorable experiences. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicates a statistically significant association of an average intensity between the communication (represented in the context of this research by the cultural

and entertainment tourism digital demand) and the international tourist receipts while the coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.2905$) explains its magnitude. In marketing terms this means enhancing communication by developing attractive cultural products, services, events or activities, fair prices and/or tariffs, convenient marketing channels, reliable personnel, physical evidence, and smooth processes, all these enhancing how visitors discover, explore, experience, and enjoy this heritage. This approach means to convert that cynical or cold "no customers, no business" into "getting customers means getting business": if the communication brings customers (i.e. tourist arrivals), the rest of the package, namely the product, price, placement, personnel, physical evidence, and, last but not least, processes make the business (i.e. revenues).

The research approach has been limited by several factors. First, although it has employed data from all 116 countries considered by the World Economic Forum report, the approach has involved a set of only seven indicators describing the cultural heritage, travel and tourism industry, and sustainable development which may seem too simple by comparison to the other attempts advancing conclusions based on the results obtained using econometric techniques. Still, there is no need for complex econometrical or statistical tools to observe what the Pearson correlation coefficient and the coefficient of determination are reasonably good enough to conclude that a diverse (in terms of content) and outstanding (in terms of recognition) cultural heritage, whose value is acknowledged through the inclusion in the World Heritage List, respective the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, drives growth for the travel and tourism industry (bringing more international tourists and boosting the revenues generated by their flow) and supports the sustainable development (contributing to the Gross Domestic Product and creating direct and indirect workplaces).

The second limit is related to the positioning of the travel and tourism industry within this exploratory research. Considering that travel and tourism represent one of the main beneficiaries of the promotion and capitalization of cultural heritage, the approach focuses on the connections between the enlisted tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the international tourism performances in terms of arrivals and receipts. As the meaning of "universal" covers both the domestic and international dimensions, a future approach should also assess the impact of the inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage Lists and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage over domestic tourism in terms of visitors and receipts.

The third limit is related to the indicators used to describe sustainable development. A simple review of the 17 goals of sustainable development advanced by Sachs et al. (2019) from the perspective of the cultural heritage suggests, on a hand, a poor connection between the tangible and intangible components of this heritage and the specific facets, as well as, at best, the minor contribution of the cultural heritage to the reaching of these objectives. That is why, for this research approach, sustainable development has been considered from the simple but relevant economic and social dimensions described by the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product formation and creation of workplaces.

As people tend to travel where they can find remarkable, authentic and well-known tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the recognition of the outstanding universal value through the inclusion in the World Heritage List, respectively the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage creates a solid background but its proper capitalization requires a

particular vision proposed by the ICOMOS (2002) and connecting the content of tangible (places of human habitation, villages, towns and cities, buildings, structures, artworks, documents, handicrafts, musical instruments, furniture, clothing and items of personal decoration, religious, ritual and funerary objects, tools, machinery and equipment, and industrial systems) or intangible (all forms of traditional and popular or folk culture, the collective works originating in a given community and based on tradition – oral traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, rituals, festivals, traditional medicine and pharmacopeia, popular sports, food and the culinary arts and all kinds of special skill connected with the material aspects of culture) cultural heritage to the experience of its consumers as an output of the heritage cycle proposed by Thurley (2005): understanding, valuing, caring for, and, finally, enjoying it.

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