

# PROPOSAL FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACTS OF TOURISM IN THE WORLD HERITAGE SITES

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The article's main objective is to establish a research agenda to study the impact of tourism on World Heritage Sites (WHS). To do this, we used the Delphi methodology, with the participation of experts from various disciplines and territorial realities, all of them linked directly to the study, planning and management of WHS.

This work has been preceded by an investigation of the impacts of tourism on the destinations included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, found in Scopus of Elsevier (Ruiz & Pulido, 2015).

In this review, we found 961 articles containing the words "World Heritage" and "Tourism". These items were analyzed and synthesized using the method of "content analysis" (Pokharel & Mutha, 2009).

178 contributions, published between 1981 and 2015 were selected, that show incidences of tourism in WHS, regardless, of whether that incidence was the result of the recognition of UNESCO. An important part of these items, were located in tourist magazines coming from universities in the US, UK, China, Australia and Italy. Mostly, drawn from the Social Sciences, Management and Business, and the Environment.

Once selected, they were classified as proposed by Webster and Watson (2002) and grouped into eight key topics: management, sustainability, tourism flows, territorial management, marketing, social impact, asset management and economic impacts. These topics were obtained from the contents of the publications.

As a result of content analysis of these 178 contributions, three major groups of publications were made. In the first, the contributions refer to general and conceptual aspects of tourism and the WHS were examined. The second group consisted of studies in consolidated destinations, and a third, was grouped by studies of destinations that were in consolidation and in which tourism was an element of endogenous development (Beeson & Doganer, 2013).

We have three other groups, the first one shows the experiences that, in the opinion of the authors, have been harmful or do not meet the goals outlined in the text of the Convention of 1972 and its subsequent practical guidelines, which were called “negatives”. The second group shows the experiences in which a sustainable improvement of tourism was observed, and which have been called “positive” and in a third group, the contributions containing proposals for tourism which generate sustainable benefits have been called “proposals”.

These are the topics where we found fewer publications, those in which one can identify a priority area of investigation. In the case of this paper, these are the areas that have been proposed for discussion with experts, but without an exclusive character, as it has been provided during the process, the option that they can identify new lines of research. To meet the stated objective, we used the Delphi method, that in the field of tourism has been used for at least forty years, especially for predicting events, forecasting the evolution of tourism demand and the trends from the market.

What is very important in this methodology is the selection of experts. Kollwitz (2011) noted that one of the problems associated with the Delphi technique is the identification of an appropriate group of experts, as they represent the desired balance of views, philosophies and experience (Wheeller et al., 1990). In this case, we provide the profile of participants, not their names and affiliations, because their anonymity is essential (Rodríguez & Pulido, 2010).

The panel was integrated with participants from a large part of world geography: Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Spain, United States of America, Malaysia and México. 71% are academics, members of the groups of research most consolidated in the subject, 13% are entrepreneurs in the tourism sector and 16% are public managers, with representation of UNESCO, ICOMOS, OWHC, heritage cities associations, among others.

Analysis of the results was performed using as a measure of concentration, the median (Q2), while the measure of dispersion used was the interquartile range ( $RI = Q3 - Q1$ ). Some studies have suggested that more than 60% of a panel arrangement can be seen as the group consensus (Hill & Fowles, 1975), while others have argued that the interquartile range should be no more than 10% higher or lower than the median (Frechtling, 2001).

Following the recommendations of Donohoe and Needham (2009), in this paper, firstly, it is deemed to have reached a broad consensus when 60% of the experts, or more, has opted for the median value; enough consensus when between 30% and 59.99% of the experts have chosen the median value; and little consensus when at least 30% of the experts consulted have chosen like response the value of the median. And, moreover, it is estimated that there is a great consensus when the interquartile range does not exceed 0.7 (which would be 10% of the 7-point of Likert scale used), considerable consensus when the interquartile range values oscillate between 0.7 and 1.5, and that there is sufficient consensus when the value exceeds 1.5. The results of this study can be sorted into three groups. In the first, questions that were developed in the first round, were not part of the Delphi methodology:

- Territorial management. Recognizing the patrimonial space as an alternative destination, main or secondary of those most visited destinations, where its appeal lies in the originality, we should assess the level of outsourcing, gentrification and depopulation of historic centers, as claimed by Yamamura (2006) and Sichenze (2006), reducing its intangible content and therefore the experience of those who visit.

Table 1  
DELPHI STUDY RESULTS

| TOPIC                | INVESTIGATION RESEARCH   | TOPIC               | INVESTIGATION RESEARCH   |
|----------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| Management           | Planning instruments in tourism  | Marketing           | Loyalty level of visitors to the WHS   |
|                      | New ICTs to convert to smart destinations  |                     | Market diversification undertaken by the WHS   |
|                      | Policy instruments for tourism   |                     | Assess the brand UNESCO in a tourist sense in the WHS  |
|                      | Networks established at different levels of management caused by transversality of own tourism       |                     | Tourism marketing models of the WHS  |
|                      | The security to be provided by touristic destinations  |                     | Products and brands to destiny level   |
| Sustainability       | The application of economic resources generated by tourism, with respect to heritage                 | Social impacts      | Study the inclusion of society in tourism  |
|                      | Environmental impact studies on the WHS  |                     | The level of transculturalization caused by visitors to the WHS  |
|                      |  |                     | Inequality caused by people who have and not have access to tourist activities   |
|                      |  |                     | Social pathologies caused by tourism   |
| Tourist flows        | The mobility of visitors in and out of the WHS   | Cultural Management | Discrimination of valorized cultural resources for tourism   |
|                      | The seasonal levels in the WHS   |                     | Knowing what are heritage interpretation strategies  |
|                      | The motivations of international visitors to the WHS   |                     |  |
|                      | The behavior of visitors in the WHS  |                     | It's definitely important to divide the research for tangible and intangible heritage resources                                |
|                      | Visitor tracking with the inclusion of new technologies  |                     |  |
|                      | Study of tourist routes most used  |                     |  |
| Territorial analysis | Tourism carrying capacity of the WHS   | Economic impacts    | It's definitely important to check the economic impacts generated by tourism in local society, beyond macroeconomic indicators |
|                      | Space tourist use and which is considered in its land use plan                                       |                     | The economic benefits generated by tourism to the local administration   |
|                      | Saturation studies and diversification of tourist areas  |                     | Investment of tourism in the WHS   |
|                      | Protection levels of the various cultural tourism resources  |                     | Characterization and development of employment directly related to tourism   |
|                      | Spaces for tourist use considered in the Territorial Planning and the polygons of protection the WHS |                     |  |

Font: Own

- Cultural Management. Preparing WHS as cultural destinations, tailored to the needs of visitors and new trends, such as creative industries and tourism, ie culture in the service of tourism, as mentioned Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher (2005).
- Social impacts, which have been little studied in the destinations, as stated by Su and Wall (2014), must be included, both for the host community and nearby villagers because, sometimes, they can receive benefits from visitors.

The second considers the issues assessed under the Delphi methodology and is contrasting the previous study of literature review and experts (presented in Table No. 1, of this summary).

**Management specifics of tourism:** Investigate the networks established in different management bodies caused by the very transversality of tourism, because as is often observed, there is a significant lack of coordination in tourist actions, where the resources are not optimized, both financial and human (Paul, 2013), for which we have proposed the creation of intergovernmental commissions. Addressing security that tourist destinations must offer. Currently, there WHS, crossing security crisis, for various reasons and it is important that public policies are oriented in this direction. As comments Korstanje (2014), the journey itself already implies a certain insecurity.

**Tourist flows:** Investigate the possibilities of applying new technologies to track visitors in WHS. It is important to track travelers (Donaire et al., 2015), overcoming the inconveniences to follow up with the technique of direct observation and undertake new models of tracking, as the use of GPS. Investigate which tourist routes are most used. The intent of this focus is to observe the distribution of visitors in the WHS and thereby avoid high concentrations that can affect the experience of visitors and at the same time, to use other areas of the WHS which have not yet been developed and that can contribute to the economic success of the town.

**Marketing:** Investigate products and brands to destiny level, that is to say, in addition to strengthening the UNESCO brand, identify alternative marketing of local brands, with native products capable of producing local benefits. Investigate the impact of tourist promotion. Proponents experts who refer to the international promotion should be noted, because it is debated whether the WHS are able to attract international tourism to the destination.

**Social impacts:** one area related to aspects of social participation, partnership and awareness of children in tourism, should seek greater participation of society in an organized way, through establishing non-governmental organizations in defense of the national heritage.

## CONCLUSIONS

About the questions, we have that the trend is further investigate case studies, perhaps because in each WHS, insertion of tourism, in each territory has its own characteristics and can not always replicate the same methodologies. However, we can harmonize and implement in destinations that share the same level of development. It is important to continue studying the relationship tourism-heritage, because the normative corpus of UNESCO is of general applicability.

The investigation of the WHS and tourism is visualized complex. Among other issues, the experts believe that tourism does not meet all international principles of sustainability. The study deals about tourism activity, which rarely can contribute to the conservation of heritage, leading to think, again, the importance of investigating this phenomenon that grows every day and therefore represents a good or bad opportunity for development in WHS.

In the first question of the Delphi study, the experts come to a consensus that recognition as WHS can increase visitor flows, being necessary, establish the reception capacity to try to practice sustainable actions. Is important to adapt tourist products about heritage around various market segments, in addition to the purely cultural and also should be attractive to the receiving society.

It is noteworthy that, according to the panel of experts, the people involved in tourism of WHS do not know the values for which the cities were recognized, which raises a new issue related to the importance of recognition of exceptionality with which count the WHS because it opens a line of research about the offer cultural and attachment to this renowned exceptionality of the territory in which this activity takes place.

In general, this article highlights the research that can be addressed in relation to the impacts generated by tourism in the WHS, lines that at no time are limiting, and are the result of a previous analysis of the literature registered in Scopus and agreed by leading experts on the subject, of the world scene. It is not intended that all these lines are studied from the same discipline, this is an opportunity offered by the study of tourism, since the intervention of a lot of sciences and disciplines to address the issue of scientific and multidisciplinary way is necessary, recognizing that the human geography, achieving collect much of the issues addressed.

Generalizing, after the Delphi study, we find that the lines of highly consensual research, as reflected in Table 1 are in total thirty-six. The topics that offer a greater amount of research in descending order are the marketing and tourism flows, with six lines respectively. The topics of management, spatial analysis and social impacts, with five research lines each. The topic of social impacts is maintained with four lines of research. Cultural management with three lines, being one of the topics in which, by consensus, a proposal line was discarded. Regarding sustainability, it can be concluded that this must be addressed transversally, this is the topic that we found in most publications and therefore generates less new lines of research. Finally, they collected by consensus the priority lines to investigate the complex relationship tourism - WHS.

