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Unveiling the Nexus: Peace Education, Tourism, and UNESCO Site Management Policies

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Objectives | The potential of UNESCO sites to serve as platforms for education and dialogue makes them ideal settings for promoting peace education through tourism. Research on peace education within the context of UNESCO sites is gradually expanding, but a systematic analysis of how peace education is integrated into tourism experiences at these sites remains underexplored. This prompts a deeper investigation into the effectiveness of specific initiatives and the nuances of visitor experiences. Limited research delves into the effectiveness of specific peace education initiatives at UNESCO sites or examines the nuances of visitor experiences in these contexts. Additionally, there is a dearth of studies focusing on UNESCO sites in specific regions, further underscoring the need for a comprehensive review to inform future research endeavors. This literature review aims to bridge these gaps by providing a foundation for a more nuanced and transversal understanding of the relationship between UNESCO sites and peace education. Ultimately, understanding the interconnectedness of UNESCO sites and peace education contributes to the broader discourse on how cultural heritage can be harnessed for peacebuilding and global understanding. The research adopts the traditional triangulation of qualitative methods such as archival analysis, semi-structured interviews, and fieldwork to explore the perception of managers towards their responsibilities to promote peace education through tourism at world heritage sites.

Methodology | This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore and analyze the intricate dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation. Ten out of twenty-seven UNESCO sites on the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran were selected through convenience sampling and investigated. The Cultural Landscape of Hawraman/Uramanat (included in the UNESCO list in 2021); Bagh-e Shahzadeh (Persian garden, 2011); Bam and its Cultural Landscape (2004); Qasabeh Gonabad (Persian Qanat, 2016); Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex (2010); Gonbad-e Qābus (2012); Pasargadae (2004); Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System (2009); Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region (2018); Persepolis (1979). Qualitative methods were used to gather necessary data. This specific research design is particularly well-suited for understanding the nuances and complexities of human behavior, experiences, and social phenomena, providing a holistic and in-

depth perspective. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on site to gather in-depth insights into informants' perspectives, experiences, and perceptions related to their ability and responsibility to promote peace education through the tourism experience related to the UNESCO sites they manage. The semi-structured format provided a balance between guidance and flexibility, allowing for the exploration of unanticipated themes. Observational methods complemented the interview data by capturing non-verbal cues, behaviors, and contextual factors that may not be fully articulated in verbal responses. Systematic observations were conducted to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon within its natural setting. In order to strengthen the reliability and comprehensiveness of the data collected, organizational records, reports, and other relevant materials (also online), were analyzed to provide additional context and triangulate findings.

Main Results and Contributions | The findings reveal a spectrum of managerial approaches utilizing heritage for peace education, ranging from proactive engagement to passive indifference. While some managers actively seek to integrate peace education principles into their programs and exhibits, others prioritize heritage preservation over educational initiatives. Moreover, the study identified disparities in knowledge and sensitivity among the interviewed managers regarding peace education and UNESCO's mandates. These variations underscore the need for targeted educational interventions to bridge knowledge gaps and enhance sensitivity toward peace education objectives. The divergent managerial approaches and varying levels of knowledge and sensitivity underscore the importance of comprehensive training programs tailored to the specific needs of heritage managers. Such programs should provide clarity on the principles of peace education, elucidate UNESCO's role in promoting peace through heritage, and offer practical guidance on integrating peace education initiatives within heritage contexts. Furthermore, fostering a platform for sharing best practices among heritage managers can facilitate collective learning and inspire innovative approaches to peace education dissemination.

Limitations | Several strategies are implemented to enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, including prolonged engagement with the data, member checking, and peer debriefing. The iterative nature of the analysis process contributed to the credibility and dependability of the findings, ensuring that the study's conclusions were firmly grounded in the data.

We acknowledge anyway the need for complementary research methodologies to further enrich our understanding of the phenomenon. Future studies may benefit from employing quantitative or mixed-methods approaches, allowing for statistical generalizability and a more comprehensive exploration of relationships and patterns within a larger sample size. The incorporation of deductive coding methods could provide a structured framework for analysis, offering a balance to the inductive approach employed in this study.

Conclusions | The detailed examination of UNESCO sites, peace education policies, and tourism practices, along with the exploration of peace education through tourism, lays the groundwork for the current study's unique contribution to the field. By synthesizing existing literature and identifying gaps, this review sets the stage for a deeper understanding of how cultural heritage, tourism, and education can intersect to foster global peace and understanding.

The literature on peace education through tourism highlights the transformative potential of travel experiences in fostering global peace and understanding. By integrating peace-oriented principles into tourism, individuals can become agents of positive change, contributing to cross-cultural dialogue and breaking down barriers. While challenges exist, the opportunities for meaningful engagement and education through travel are significant. Continued research and practical initiatives are essential to harness the full potential of peace education through tourism and to create a more interconnected and harmonious world.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the diverse managerial perspectives regarding the utilization of heritage for peace education and highlights the need for targeted educational interventions to enhance managers' understanding and sensitivity toward this crucial endeavor. By equipping heritage managers with the necessary knowledge and tools, we can harness the potential of heritage sites and cultural institutions as powerful vehicles for promoting peace and fostering global understanding.

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