

The role of cultural heritage quality management for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and peace thorough tourism

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Objectives | Why science should talk about peace? Which kind of contribution scientific research should provide in order to aid effectively the construction and maintenance of mutual global understanding and peace? The scientific approach and analysis of social, environmental, economic, technological and political phenomena should provide evidence which, in turn, should be used to inform the political decision making process at regional, national and international level. We are aware, today, about the fact that conflicts and incidences such as the dramatically current phenomena of migrations, could be triggered by complex causes or conjunct of causes such as social inequalities, corruption and social injustice, economic crises, political instability when violent implications occur, lack of education, intolerance and religious extremism, as well as climatic alterations (Carbone, 2017). Every scientific field has thus its call of duty to suggest decision makers the path to follow, or at least collaborate in the decision making process regarding the conflicts resolution. This is the general objective of this work, to produce – in the specific fields of cultural heritage management and tourism - inputs that can inform the creation/revision of regional, national and international policies taking into account as its final aim, the contribution of international tourism activities as vehicle of intercultural dialogue and peace. In this broader context, the specific objective is to define the role of the cultural heritage management practices within destinations and propose an appropriate definition of the concept of cultural heritage quality management.

Methodology | This work is the result of a theoretical investigation carried out as a follow up of a previous empirical research (Carbone, 2016). The latter (carried out in Italy, Spain and Portugal) aimed to explore the relationship between heritage management, the perception of quality by the cultural heritage managers and the capacity to promote intercultural dialogue through tourism. The findings encouraged us to further expand our field of action, including the policies of cultural heritage management within destinations (regardless of their geographical boundaries) as one of the first steps towards the promotion of peaceful and intercultural dialogue through tourism. In the present work, therefore, with the aim of

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embracing wider horizons, specifically those related to international tourism and the promotion of peace, we took the empiric evidences of our previous research as a starting point to develop a new extensive literature review and analysis of secondary data, including those provided by our own previous researches, thus proceeding as in a first step of the interpretivist grounded theory (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 83). The debate about the tendency of removing heritage sites from the experience of the community who “owns” (Grimwade & Carter, 2000) has started many years ago. Nevertheless, with the present work we apply a complex approach, putting in relations topics such as cultural heritage management, local communities’ involvement, international visitors experience and the promotion of intercultural dialogue through tourism, as vehicle of promotion of peace. The built platform of knowledge thus has allowed us to achieve our goals, which was the systematization of knowledge on the topic of cultural heritage, tourism and peace, approaching authors such as De Villiers (2014), Timothy and Saarinen (2013), Blanchard and Higgins-Desbiolles (2013), Oosterbeek and Pollice (2014), Carbone (2017). According to such a knowledge, we thus proposed some working hypotheses for future studies and, even more important, a substantial theoretical contribution on the definition of Cultural Heritage Quality Management.

Main Results and Contributions | The work presented represents the exploratory phase within a long in-depth study on the role of cultural heritage and its management as a primary, fundamental component for an effective promotion of intercultural dialogue and peace through tourism. Nevertheless, at this stage the work already presents important theoretical contributions, such as the reflection on the conceptual convergence of three dimensions: cultural heritage, tourism and the promotion of peace. In particular, we speculate on the role of the cultural heritage quality management, to which we propose a definition based on the proposed perspective. Such a proposal represent a strong theoretical contribution and starting point for upcoming studies on the subject. But it goes beyond the theoretical context as it could have big sectorial implications through an immediate influence for new governance hypothesis and policies of management for the tourism sector and cultural heritage managers.

Limitations | This work is placed among the first attempts in this very specific area. For this reason, it represents a theoretical contribution, but empirical support is currently missing, as well as references to a literature directly related to the specific theme of the convergence between heritage management, tourism and promotion of peace. Such a literature does not exist. We believe however that these limitations are totally acceptable, as we are contributing to inaugurate a research area that we consider important for the future.

Conclusions | These are times in which they build walls along national borders, and there is a growing trend (fuelled by populist groups in different countries) to return to the economic and socio-cultural isolationism of nations, sad expression of the globalization project’s failure. It is the common idea that, in these circumstances, we assist to an inevitable crisis of the soft power. We provided a theoretical contribution to add arguments and support an opposite belief. The promotion of culture through innovative forms of cultural heritage management, allied with the tourism activity and industry (in the broadest sense, from the tourist experience to the dynamics and practices of international promotion of a destination), can be a strong instrument of soft power, to ally to the national strategies of International Relations.

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