

Heritage and Tourism

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Abstract

This study presents a general reflection about the current relationship between tourism and heritage. It focuses on the different perspectives and profits of the heritage, one of which has to do with consumption and, within this, the cultural tourism. The cultural tourism that grows day by day in Mexico, in the local space, and at the international level.

Keywords: Heritage; Tourism; Identity; Consumption; Culture.

Resumo

Patrimônio e turismo

Este trabalho apresenta uma reflexão geral sobre a atual relação entre turismo e patrimônio, centrando-se em diferentes olhares e nas utilidades do patrimônio, entre elas o consumo e, dentro deste, o turismo cultural, que cresce a cada dia, tanto no México como em âmbito internacional.

Palavras-chave: Patrimônio; Turismo; Identidade; Consumo; Cultura.

Resumen

Patrimonio y turismo

Este trabajo presenta una reflexión general en torno a la relación actual entre turismo y patrimonio. Se centra en las diferentes miradas y utilidades del patrimonio, una de las cuales tiene que ver con el consumo y, dentro de este, el turismo cultural. Turismo cultural que crece día a día, tanto en México en el espacio local, como en el ámbito internacional.

Palabras clave: Patrimonio; Turismo; Identidad; Consumo; Cultura.

PRESENTATION

In recent decades a growth of tourism has taken place in the world. Already in this century, this activity has a preponderant place in the global economy, and sometimes in local, a trend that in spite of the crises of the system in recent years seems to continue to grow gradually. The predominant and hegemonic discourse maintains the conception that tourism is an instrument for progress and social welfare.

On the other hand and in parallel, also is possible to identify the growth of the interest for the socio-territorial heritage's preservation, tangible and intangible, and it is assumed that its value and importance transcends time and space, times

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and borders. In this sense, the natural and cultural heritage has become an element of great value for society, in which is shaped something of the essence of the place, as well as the wealth and environmental diversity, ecological, geological, geomorphological, linguistic, religious, gastronomic, and architectural of a place.

So today, when consumption is the engine of the economy, the natural and cultural heritage has been the object of the commodification and it has been exploited as a fundamental object for the promotion of tourism. The fact of considering the local resources and the territorial legacy like objects of consumption often leads to a deterioration of what is intended to be valued, that has generated a debate about the relevance of associating tourism and heritage. Without a doubt, it is a controversial discussion, and in this debate there are favorable and unfavorable opinions. But there is no doubt that the pair heritage-tourism is now almost indissoluble.

If we consider that the patrimonial resources are a product that can be commercialized, so, the relationship between heritage (supply) and tourism (law-suit) will depend, to a large extent, on the “needs” of consumers, virtually infinite (NIVÓN BOLÁN, 2010), instead of focusing on “The need to gather points of view and interests” (PRATS, 2003, p. 135), this is, “sit down to negotiate” between tourism and heritage and “to consider heritage as an integral tool for local planning” (PRATS, 2003, p. 136).

The pair heritage-tourism was configured over time, being strengthened and consolidated in the last decades; to understand it involves identifying, on the one hand, the way in which the conception of heritage changed; and, in the other hand, how tourism is reconfigured, diversifying the supply, with new market niches. From this the bonds that unite this pair are being intensified, becoming complex and strength, inasmuch as the tourist activity acquires a greater global presence and that heritage is instituted, whether as a legacy to humanity, to a nation or to a community.

About this bond, Unesco declares:

There is not necessary to prove the affirmation that tourism can be the best friend and the worst enemy of development. In view of the economic weight of the tourism industry – currently considered the most important in the world, before the automobile and chemical industry – it is necessary to pay attention to this phenomenon with multiple aspects and planetary consequences. The effects of tourism are such that innovative strategies are needed to lay the foundations of real international, regional and local policies.

UNESCO proposes to accompany its 191 Member States in the formulation of these policies, reformulating the relationship between tourism and cultural diversity, between tourism and intercultural dialogue, and between tourism and development. In this way it intends to contribute to the fight against poverty, to the protection of the environment and to the mutual appreciation of cultures. (UNESCO, 2013)

Here we focus on a review of the most usual speeches about this bond: one that assumes that tourism contributes to the valuation and preservation of heri-

tage, another one that considers that the result of this relation has been negative for heritage. Consequently, perspectives and reflections are presented; negative reviews are analyzed on the one side and praises on the other side. There are several proposals and alternatives that are given in order to link natural and cultural wealth to leisure and recreation, as well as to face the challenges of preserving the heritage in times when tourism is booming and its deregulation affects many local communities or international monuments.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

The concept of heritage is complex and involves cultural, legal, administrative-accounting and economic aspects of territorial and even environmental regulation. From this come many implications about kinds of heritages: cultural heritage, historic heritage, natural heritage, heritage of humanity, tangible and intangible heritage, collective heritage and individual heritage, among others. Each of these leads to understand and classify heritage in different ways, as well as to identify and manage the many places, landscapes and areas that claim their valuation.

In general, a common reference is the conceptualization of Unesco, which is around what is called cultural heritage, because it generates a concern about the main risks that the heritage runs because of the war events that so recurrently strikes mankind or natural phenomena, which put in danger vulnerable societies and the heritage that mankind inherits.

So, cultural heritage is officially defined as the set of movable and immovable property; monuments; buildings; places with historical or esthetic value; archaeological sites; books; objects; works of art; physical, biological and geological formations; endangered animal and plant species. The ephemeral, the intangible and the immaterial are also heritage – there is a discussion about the concept –, as well as scientific and philosophical theories, literature, religion, rites, oral history, music, dance, traditional and popular culture, philosophical or spiritual knowledge systems. According to this definition, the importance of heritage is that it is a conduit that links people with their history, depository of the symbolic value of cultural identities and also a mechanism for maintaining peace and understand other peoples, because it contributes to the dialogue between human groups, between cultures and civilizations (CINU, 2002).

According to Fernández de Paz (2006), the heritage can be understood as culture, in other words, as an historical-artistic treasure, as identity, from elements – material and immaterial –, and as a resource, that is to say, as touristic offer, expression of an idealized past sometimes concretized in the form of dramatization or like a commercialized replica (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2012).

According to Prats (1997), heritage is reason and feeling, reflection and experience; is invention – unconscious personal processes – and social construction – personal and unconscious processes of legitimation – from the social and cultural hegemony.

About where is its symbolic value, Michel De Certeau says:

Old things become notable. The most fantastic things are in the daily life of a city. [...] Of course, the fantastic things did not come back by itself. It was attracted by the protectionist economy. [...] This revelation is exorcized under the name "heritage." Its strangeness becomes legitimacy. [...] For economic, national and cultural reasons, it turns to this past that has often aged less than the new [...] there is more renovation than innovation [...] more protection than creation [...] But with this it is insinuated something that no longer obeys the "conservative" ideology of heritage. This past is considered as imaginary. A foreigner is already there at his home. (DE CERTEAU, 2006, p. 136)

ELEMENT OF SOCIAL BOND

However, heritage is more than this, and it is valued not only by the wealth of objects, works, sites, landscapes, traditions and practices that includes, but by the feelings and emotions that generates. Here, social unity through identity and territorial and cultural appropriation has a preponderant role.

In other words, we can affirm that social groups form communities, in the first instance from a shared language that allows them to interact. Later, the unit of the group is constructed based on the recognition of some common elements, something like patriotic symbols or the heritage elements. In this sense, heritage is a substrate of identity, local, regional or national. It implies an appropriation of the legacy by a particular group and its wealth consists in that it is an element of union and consensus.

García Canclini (1995, p. 107) considers that the identity is a kind of construction that has been narrated. For this, founding events are established, in the majority of the cases it is about the appropriation of the territory, through the foundation or independence achieved against others. To this are added the actions of who defends the place, put in order and establish legitimate ways of life that is different than other communities. After this, the instruments of memory are built: books, museums, civic rituals and political speeches. All of them are constituent of the Identity – with capital letter – and consecrators of nationalist rhetoric. To these instruments are added others. Machuca (1998, p. 29) mentions cities, its historical centers and the heritage sites of the humanity. All of them are texts about national and local histories, the culture of the motherland and the common imaginary identity. Places of memory reconverted in touristic spaces where it is possible to identify traditional rituals of social cohesion and old and renovated tourist tours (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2009).

History is a reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, which allows identifying a common past, bringing it to the present. In this way, monuments, celebrations and historic centers become the material reflection of history and fulfill a legitimating function that the State needs. Heritage is exalted and celebrated as a symbol of the past and of a supposed political unity of the nation (LACARRIEU, 1998, p. 46).

Heritage expresses solidarity, unites people who share a set of goods and practices that give them identity and sense of belonging, is also constituted as a place of social complicity and political consensus. It is an instrument that serves to unify the nation, to pretend that society is not divided into classes. In fact, this was evident again during the bicentennial celebrations of Independence in several countries of Latin America (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2012).

What is considered authentic, unique, even in the imaginary, has a great symbolic value. A kind of reinvented memory, of cult to the past, necessary for the differentiation and resistance to modernity, the different is wanted whenever elements of homogenization are taken to strengthen that is supposedly unique.

the “motherland” history linked to important chronological events of the past – according to which the official legislation decrees the historic center – and giving an account of the local knowledge about the subject. This legitimation of a coherent and heroic past has its counterpart in a present linked to a constant process of loss, to the inevitability of growth. (LACARRIEU, 1998, p. 53)

And is that “there is a pursuit of an ideal past to overcome the ‘loss’ of the present, to remount the ‘crisis of cities’” (LACARRIEU, 1998, p. 53).

The local becomes a place of reference in the resizing of the traditional and the heritage. History inflation does not mean “past abuse,” but the possibility of integrating new senses of the past-present-future according to the heritage, preservation and historical centers, are strongly instrumental supports to mobilize resources and articulate claims that do not necessarily have some relation with history. (LACARRIEU, 1998, p. 57)

Finally, the past is in the present and heritage is reused, socially, culturally, politically and strategically.

In recent years, in the hand of the international tourism boom, it has become fashionable to dig in the past of each town, city and stone to find what is possible to boast about, even if there is not anything to see things is invented. However, for Mexico this situation has been easy enough, because for a long time the importance of their cultural heritage is clear to Mexicans, especially for domestic consumption: to reinforce the nationalism and to be part of the social cohesion. (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2009, p. 537)

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

But there is more to say, something already mentioned that will be further analyzed below. The look towards the heritage as integrating element of a national identity responds to a predominantly political use in the handle of the local, state or continental national symbols, if it is applicable, as a cohesive and unifying claim, blurring social, ethnic and cultural differences, among other (PRATS, 1997); in other words, it is exalted with eagerness to configure a collective social imaginary, the imaginary or invented nation (ANDERSON, 1993). The heritage

as a historic building in Mexico (PRATS, 1997) goes back to the time of Independence, to the culture of the hegemonic creole groups at that time and is rebuilt or revived after the Mexican Revolution idealizing the distant past indigenous only in museums, not in everyday reality. An example of this is the historical and heroic deeds that are celebrated nowadays as liberating landmarks and that construct a political state and an authoritarian, centralist and artificial cultural project; the same happens in case of battles, the places where were the protagonists of some important events, the houses in which they were born or lived, the guns and standards and all the museographic and architectural folklore around the theme (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2009).

The Mexican nation, after Independence and the Revolution, needed to unify and erase ethnic and cultural differences, to blur social classes, to devalue the opposition of different political or economic projects. So, the heritage, as a historical construction, is rebuilt in Mexico by these two historical events, when the dominant groups homogenized, created an identity and erased social and ethnic differences in a process accompanied by political practices, in this way, some of the most relevant characters subsumed the representation of the diversity of social actors and cultural aspects. By this way many 'Mexicos' were standardized, from the federal to the state, regional cultures within a state or between many of them, towns or cities and ethnic groups. All of this with the homogenizing desire to set up a national identity that aspired or attempted to blur or erase ethnic, cultural and social differences (BONFIL BATALLA, 1999; FLORESCANO, 2004; STAVENHAGEN; CARRASCO, 2004; VILLORO, 1994).

Nevertheless, all of this is questionable, especially its unifying national character, since as Bonfil Batalla (1999) states, there is no a Mexican cultural or national heritage; the national culture is an artificial construction, project and yearning impossible, as Benedict Anderson (1993) also affirms. However, above all this or in parallel, is the world of affects which is articulated sinuously with the culture, speeches and practices, identity desires and recognition needs, although they are part of a mythology and ritual.

Heritage creates identity, and this occurs in this way when it is done in a festive and purposeful manner, hegemonic or not, also when it is a resistance movement, counterhegemonic in this case, as in the various social struggles of resistance that take place in some communities – the fight of the golf course in Tepoztlán, for example (CONCHEIRO BÓRQUEZ, 2012)–, when the local identity is recreated before a foreign tourist project.

CONSUMER OBJECT

Heritage is also an element of consumption and, consequently, there is a look towards it in terms of sale and market which increasingly seems more important (PRATS, 1997). It is, then, a product offered to the tourist, among whom the ones called heritage of humanity are emphasize, places turned into tourist attractions in the world, among which are the cities with colonial historic

centers throughout Latin America and archaeological sites, as well as certain landscapes valued by its beauty or for its natural and cultural wealth. At the national level, and even local, all types of proposals are developed, from the private initiative and municipal governments, state or national – or uniting all the orders of government within the promotion of the tourist policy, sometimes hand in hand with the cultural offer and always together with the discourse of social development and economic revenue. In Mexico, for example, the Magic Villages Program and the Colonial Cities stand out; there are also places that are valued as marvels named like this by business groups, without forgetting the traditional archaeological federal zones, as well as national parks or natural areas protected by the State. These titles have the function of promoting and catapulting the places to an assessment and knowledge which in many cases contribute to the development of tourism projects.

In this way, the sites where historical events occurred, such as those mentioned in the previous section, can also be used from an economic point of view. Just as the Revolution, and especially the Independence, give them an outstanding plus, as in the cases of Guanajuato or Querétaro (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2009, 2010) and also Morelia, where Morelos was born, or Puebla, where historical battles occurred.

However, for our country, such places of memory, heritage monuments, symbols of nationalism, have always been present, what is done is that they are restored, reactivate, and promote like never before. In the nineties, for example, several cities and places of our geography were declared like world heritage by UNESCO, which makes them a potential for international diffusion of positioning of the country in world level. (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2009, p. 539)

The revaluation of historical spaces is not exempt from the theatricalization and spectacularization of culture, as was done for the construction of a national identity through cultural policies, heroes and monuments, museums, parties, civic education and patriotic commemorations (GARCÍA CANCLINI, 1989). The same can be said about the promotional discourses of tourism in our days, or even covering the national identity and the commercial touristic. Hence it is possible to speak of staging, simulacrum and hyperreality (BALANDIER, 1994; LIPOVETSKI, 2008).

All of this is part of the commercialization of culture (SANTANA TALAVERA, 2003) and of the history through patriotism, and, why not say, of the consumption of sensations and feelings that make people to feel alive – although only in a festive moment of consumption – in a world that runs wildly without any direction, increasingly asleep or anesthetized by the media and an introjective and baffling culture. The heritage consumed allows the people to be able to project itself in patriotic acts, in heroes that gave their lives to senses of existence which today seem to be lost in a whirlpool of activities and frivolous conversations and devoid of reflection, emotion or wisdom; or to look for a slower time and place, authentic and human more than the television news or the meetings in the chat.

Heritage in times of consumption starts from this last as a way of life, like a reproduction of the current social system. Consumption is also a boost, a reconversion of human desires (BAUMAN, 2007); a way of life that includes tourism, from which the practices associated with it are accommodated quickly and easily (SANTANA TALAVERA, 1997).

It is a tendency to associate consumption with objects. Nevertheless, it is a way of managing ideas, memories and desires too. Both a shampoo and a political candidate are consumed; but culture is also consumed and emotions are consumed and, as we will see later, memory and imaginary are consumed. Emotions arise from people, of their thoughts, from the depths of their being. Then, they may feel or block themselves, may express themselves or be silent they can share and felt the emotional energy of the environment, as in a party or, without going further, a patriotic commemoration. And is that the patriotic commemorations are not only domination, they are also literary narrative and emotion, cover needs, as it is like to fly with the imagination, to be immerse in the adventures of stories, enjoy with the mind. The celebration is enjoyed with the senses and the body. Thus, social groups share, criticize or are integrated into the field of consumption, which is part of that celebration. It is, also, a cultural attraction that can be united not only with the authentic and different, which gives meaning and covers desires, but combines with travel, tours, recreation and fun, change of environment. Religious, patriotic or other celebrations – however it is imaginary, created and self-imposed – allow people to get out of the routine, to chat, to drink, to eat, to live together without the pressure of everyday life, to forget for a moment the slopes, debts, worries and the world that is considered real. The tourists share and consume as nomadic social actors in pursuit of something new or different. Tourism leads to consumption of identity, services, transportation, hotels, restaurants, objects, souvenirs, clothing, food, status and comfort, while wishes, illusions, desires, histories and feelings are consumed too (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2011).

With globalization, nation states lost sovereignty and economic interdependence grew, which may have made them to lose social cohesion and cultural identity. The return to culture seeks to compensate the loss of independence through the cultural heritage policies with events such as the celebrations commemorating the 200 years of Independence that were recently organized in several Latin American countries (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2011).

Today we live some social circumstances in which desire is important, wishes are fundamental, and as part of this is what is already considered almost as necessity: to travel and to know other worlds, or reconnect ourselves with our origins, to approach the authentic things, savoring the primordial, smelling the truth, listening to legends or stories with heroes, touching a grandiose or picturesque reality. And in this experiences are interrelated consumption and identity, heritage and tourism, cities and imaginary. (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2010, p. 202)

HERITAGE AND TOURISM

And this is how heritage and tourism are intimately related, especially in the natural and cultural sphere, as part of the territorial legacy of each town or city, park or landscape, territory or country. On the one hand, is identity, and on the other, consumption; one predominantly political and the other economic. However, the modes of production and consumption generate blurred links with power and its correlation of forces, and it is difficult to establish the boundaries between one and the other, even more in our global world.

Identity can be seen as belonging, security and sense, or as domination and imposition of coercion and social obedience. It is a construction that is reported: founding events are narrated, the appropriation of a territory by different means is recreated – readings, films, museums, speeches, civic rituals, all part of the devices of nationalist identity and rhetoric (GARCÍA CANCLINI, 1995). But perhaps today, with tourism consumption, certain social groups project identities into the future and show how authentic and different we are than other cultures, feeling, believing and promoting it for political and economic purposes. And also the identities are useful, more than to promote the identification with something and differentiation of something, to create an space –real or imaginary– of security and mental certainty, of human warmth and emotional restraint, to feel good and in harmony with the others, in a runaway, unintelligible and unapproachable world (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2012).

The identity and consumer imaginaries that make up the tourism heritage can be used from political power or from the market – private or state –, and also from people (CASTORIADIS 1983). Both, identity heritage and consumer heritage coexist nowadays, and far from gaining ground the second over the first, we maintain in these pages that, in the case of Mexico, there is a cordial coexistence between both through tourism. Moreover, the first encourages the second, and this, in its turn, maintains and recreates the first (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2011).

HERITAGE TOURISM MANAGEMENT

According to Prats (1997, 2003), for a long time the heritage has with tourism an opportunity, although the last one may also result in a threat to the first. If we consider the relationships and actions that establish the various agents involved with the heritage, we find that regardless of whether it is intended to be preserved or exploited, both actions require socio-territorial management that guarantees a future, when the value of the cultural legacy is sometimes placed at the center and sometimes the society that seeks to benefit itself from it.

Heritage is a space of economic dispute, political and symbolic, crossed by three agents: the private sector, the State and social movements. The private sector is governed by needs of economic accumulation and reproduction of the labor force and is permeated by dynamics of exploitation, expansion, speculation and deterioration of goods. For its part, the State defends and regulates the pres-

ervation and values heritage as an integrating element of nationality and of the unification of cultural policy. The social movements follow the patterns of communities that, in the best case, are united to be proprietary of a site considered as a legacy worthy to be defended and valued. Within the framework of an inequitable society there are differences in the access to the heritage. The hegemonic classes have a privileged appropriation, while others do not have the same link with the cultural heritage (GARCÍA CANCLINI, 1999).

These three agents are linked to the heritage based on their interests, of its correlation of forces, expectations, abilities, trajectory, values and of their knowledge. In this sense, and as was said earlier, within the framework of current capitalism, heritage is considered an object of consumption which, according to Santana Talavera (1997), involves touristic use, in which there is a recreation accompanied by an appropriate scenery, and sometimes even spectacularization.

Pierre Nora (apud AUGÉ, 2006) establishes the relationship between the intention to preserve, the crisis of identity and the loss of meaning of the institutions and monuments that end up being the “places of memory.” And today, these seem sacred objects worthy of pilgrimage, whether patriotic or for the purpose to develop people (cultural tourism) or simply to be distracted (holiday break). And also, of course, they are part of the “imagination of those who can fly over the borders of their desire, offering slogans and providing stereotypes” (SANTANA TALAVERA, 1997, p. 9).

What the tourist expects to see and what is shown is an image of inalterability, the supremacy of a past and lasting splendor. In front of what is placed is what we usually understand as a cultural heritage, whose applications are almost impossible to end up being put at the service of all kinds of identity impositions, almost all political or / and commercially determined. (DELGADO, 2007, p. 96)

The pair heritage-tourism is also generally associated with a third element that is the development, that if it is not the objective of this work to tackle it, we are going to mention it. At present, tourism heritage is identified as a way of contributing to the development, though, as explained above, this identification is questionable. On the one hand, it is said that tourism promotion has devastated heritage and, on the other hand, the alternative that the heritage is supported by the public treasury in a parasitic way is criticized. “Tourism and heritage are needed, therefore, mutually for any kind of thing that can be located in that conceptual nebula that we call sustainable development” (PRATS, 2003, p. 135).

According to Prats (2003), heritage and tourism need each other for sustainable development. Santana reaffirms it (2003): cultural tourism that is sometimes conceived as alternative, is also, in part, a consummation of the commercialization of the culture, and certain cultural elements are offered in the tourist market. And is that, at last, today we have in our country hybrid activations (Prats, 1997), in the sense of using of heritage to identity purposes and for tourism purposes, and according to me, both forms complement each other without contradiction in Mexico, indeed, I would add that they needed each other, with the positive and negative things that this has and may have in the future. (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2011, p. 159)

FINAL COMMENTS

Heritage has been considered within the framework of tourism management in different ways; these include two: the one that promotes it as a characteristic of a society, in other words, as unifying of a national identity and promoting it as a commercial element, for sale and consumption (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2011). And is that in our days, between hopelessness, hope and hyperreality, is advancing a kind of massive tourism that pursuit, in search of a meaning, the reconstructed or artificial past that governments and certain social sectors involved are willing to activate, reactivate or invent for hyperconsumption (FERNÁNDEZ PONCELA, 2012). Within this context, is the cultural heritage or what PRATS (1997, p.65) calls “the patrimonial tourism market.”

Perhaps, the question is how to get both heritages to coexist without radically altering what is valued, is elevated and positioned as the main attractor to boost tourism. In other words, public and private intervention in places with material or ephemeral heritage cannot be left exclusively in the hands of the supply and demand, as this would promptly bring the deterioration and declination of the territories intervened and their heritage, natural and cultural, tangible or intangible. But the fragility is not limited to it, also manifests itself in the commitment that the governmental instances are making considering that tourism will be an engine of the regional and municipal economy, capable of bringing sustainable development to different places, precisely in territories with considerable levels of poverty and marginalization, from that public policies in general and the tourist in particular have to be rethought in many cases, adapt to each situation, since history and culture, to politics and the economy, as well as the public opinion in the specific place in which it is intended to implement them. State and market interventions should be leveled, and dialogue between local and national governments should be established in order to confirm that Prats (2003) has said for some time: heritage, tourism and development are practically condemned to get along with each other, and on this depends the conservation of the first, the growth of the second and the optimal conditions for the life of the people and communities involved in the tourist activity.

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