

Chapter 5

From Tangible Heritage to Intangible Heritage: Dimensions of the Cultural Tourism

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly competitive tourism panorama where destinations and the offer of products has increased significantly, both in quantitative and qualitative terms (OMT, 2015), the Alentejo Regional Tourism Entity (ARTE), as part of its development and communication strategy, has been claiming the intangible heritage as a differentiating element of its offer, as way to ensure a distinctive international position. The strategic option of submitting several intangible cultural resources, representative of Alentejo's memory and identity, to UNESCO's Intangible Heritage, aims at promoting the region's culture in addition to legitimizing new attributes for a tourist approach centred on creativity and innovation, having the experience as a paradigm and disruptive element. The framework of the new tourism development-operating model presented here is supported on assumptions, such as: network development, business shared development, implementation of museum interpretation units, storytelling and the integration of do it yourself base technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Culture, in its most varied forms of expression as a cultural heritage, is nowadays a major tourist resource, namely due to the uniqueness that it may add to a destination (Richards & Wilson, 2006). The built cultural heritage was the one that at an early stage of the tourist activity was assumed as one of the most important attraction factors. Currently, in a context of growing tourist competitiveness, intangible

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heritage is also an important resource (Barrio et al., 2012; Park, 2010). The experiential dimension and the emotional bond, intrinsic characteristics of the intangible heritage, provide new levels of attractiveness and connection between the tourist and the destination. Nowadays, intangible cultural heritage has a strategic value of increased meaning, considering its differentiating dimension. From a global and integrated perspective, in order to achieve the full expression of cultural tourism it is necessary to identify the existence of the following four key elements:

- Heritage cultural assets -tangible and intangible-;
- Tourist demand;
- Secondary component, as an essential support structure for tourism; and
- Product and experiences (Rodzi et. al, 2013).

As a product and tourism experience, the cultural dimension can exist and express in different ways, namely and desirably, in combination with other resources.

The emergence of destinations and clusters does not occur automatically. In order to behave in a coordinated matter, individual attractions and businesses must share common or at least similar resources. These resources can be either physical—such as landscape, climate, flora and fauna—or cultural. However, what most successful destinations have in common is the cultural background or cultural identity, comprising habits and traditions, social structures and mentalities, local people’s way of life and work (Adler, cited by Ravar, 2013, pp. 45).

From the perspective of a tourist destination and while adopting a strategic view of the cultural product development, these resources can be systematized in the following three core levels (Ratz, 2011):

- Non-living culture,
- Culture manifested in everyday life, and
- Animated culture.

The non-living culture category mainly covers the built tangible heritage, including unique buildings with a unique architecture, as is the Eiffel Tower. Also included in this group, the built heritage, representative of architectural styles or historical periods, art pieces, tools and/or utensils used in everyday life, namely the industrial heritage (e.g. cork processing units or marble extraction units).

This category is established as a backdrop for tourists with motivations or activities of an undifferentiated category, influencing the tourist experience in its composite sense. On the other hand, the atmosphere and the built heritage of a destination may be the main attraction factor for a given tourist with specific cultural motivations, interested in the landscape, architecture and cultural environment of a city or region.

The non-living culture category resources may be integrated into a tourism context without human contribution although in essence there is obviously the human creative dimension and action. For most tourists, sightseeing activities occupy most of their travel time as an efficient way to get to know the historical centres, churches, forts, castles, museums, etc.

The concept of culture manifested in everyday life includes, for example,

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