

Cultural Heritage: The Forgotten Resource for Marketing and Sustainable Development of the Local Communities

Călin Vegheș¹

Abstract

Under the slogan “Our heritage: where the past meets the future”, European Union has declared 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage in an unprecedented attempt to enable people to become more interested in and involved with the cultural heritage, and to recognize its universal value and importance in the future development of the individuals, communities and societies. In spite of an increased acknowledgement and extending capitalization, the employment of the cultural heritage, in its tangible and intangible forms, as an asset the local communities may benefit from is still limited. The contribution of the cultural heritage to the sustainable development remains less relevant and illustrates the extent toward which individuals and the local communities, consequently societies, are able to preserve, promote and make the most of this forgotten resource. Paper explores the connections between the cultural heritage, marketing and the sustainable development of the local communities based on the secondary data regarding the involvement, perceived importance, access and participation related to the cultural heritage in order to assess if local communities grasp and consider the potential of this heritage to support their sustainable development through of an appropriate marketing effort.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, sustainable development, local communities, marketing

1. Introduction

Definition given to the cultural heritage by the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Committee (2002) distinguishes among the other attempts to explain the content of the cultural heritage through the focus on the experiences the future heritage consumers may enjoy discovering expressions of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expression and values. Cultural heritage takes the forms of tangible (places of human habitation, villages, towns and cities, buildings, structures, art works, documents, handicrafts, musical instruments, furniture, clothing and items of personal decoration, religious, ritual and funerary objects, tools, machinery and equipment, and industrial systems) or intangible (all forms of traditional and popular or folk culture, the collective works originating in a given community and based on tradition – oral traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, rituals, festivals, traditional medicine and pharmacopeia, popular sports, food and the culinary arts and all kinds of special skill connected with the material aspects of culture) heritage.

Observing that, to economists, culture is an output for individual consumption and individual input (through increasing individual knowledge and competences), but also as a collective consumption (by visiting museums) and a collective input (by being used to produce new culture), Barrère (2016) argues that culture matters, particularly culture that

¹Bucharest University of Economic Studies

has stood the test of time making the transition to heritage status and culture that has spillover effects – cultural goods, cultural commons and cultural heritages, all impacting economic choices and performances, as well as the quality of social life.

Although a sensitive subject for those directly involved in cultural and heritage activities, establishing the economic value of the cultural heritage represents a mandatory starting point in the design of any attempt aiming to promote and capitalize the cultural heritage. Observing the significant differences in terms of vision between the economists and historians, Ruijgrok (2006) has defined the economic value of cultural heritage as the amount of material and immaterial welfare, more than the financial benefits, that heritage can generate for society and identified as main outputs cash flows from its exploitation, housing comfort reflected in the real estate prices, recreation opportunities provided and the sheer knowledge that it will be passed on to the next generation (bequest value).

Bowitz and Ibenholt (2009) have remarked the increasing political focus on cultural heritage due to a higher public interest in heritage per se but also to the heritage potential to stimulate economic activity in regions with economic problems: as tourists (but not only them) are increasingly demanding cultural experiences of various sorts, the local cultural heritage or initiatives such as festivals, concerts and amusement parks can help attract visitors to the community and generate positive effects for the local economy in terms of revenues and places of work.

Under a context described by a growing interest in cultural and heritage economics generated by the increasing interest in the interaction between expanded leisure time and increased demand from visitors to cultural and heritage attractions, respectively the shifts in government policy towards market economics and curtailment of public spending, cultural institutions and heritage sites often provide a variety of public contributions such as symbolic cultural items, historical value, social value, aesthetic value, spiritual value, educational value and shared experience under the form of public goods that contribute to society's well-being but with an economic values not easily to be determined (Choi et al., 2010).

Considering heritage vital for the nation's development, and the historic heritage is fundamental in creating a sense of place for a community by adding character and distinctiveness, Sabrizaa Abd Rashid (2015) suggested that local communities should develop a systematic approach of cultural mapping aiming to identify, record, classify and analyze the community's cultural resources in order to facilitate their economic and social development having as support the acknowledgment of the cultural diversity and implemented through proper heritage related planning and programs.

Attempting to connect cultural heritage and sustainable development, Vecco and Srakar (2018) have made a comprehensive literature review and identified a limited number of articles dealing specifically with the development of a sustainability index of cultural heritage (focusing mainly on the relationship between sustainability and cultural heritage tourism) based on which have advanced a set of headline indicators for cultural heritage site sustainability: conservation of cultural heritage; cultural cohesion and integration of the local community; protection of the natural and cultural ecosystem; quality of cultural heritage site management; economic dimension of cultural heritage tourism for the host community and destination; social-carrying capacity of the destination; sustaining tourist satisfaction; development and planning control of the area of the cultural heritage site;

tourist activity seasonality; tourism employment; and transport related to tourism. Preservation of the cultural heritage should be the first step of the capitalization of this resource contributing, as Prompayuk and Chairattananon (2016) have observed, to the maintaining of the cultural memory (through the physical evidence and transfer of ancestors' knowledge and values), creating a convenient proximity (through the interactions between environment, people and community activities), supporting the environment diversity (as an identity or differentiating reference of the local community) and generating economic gains (by attracting visitors and saving costs of new buildings). Under a context in which culture becomes increasingly important, the assessment of the cultural heritage value and its capitalization should consider its various significances (aesthetic, historic, research, social, spiritual or other) leading to an increased respect for the cultural heritage assets, a more holistic and sustainable approach of its regeneration and capitalization, and, as a consequence, even to a better quality of life (Bakri et al., 2015). As Robinson and Picard (2006) have observed, tourism is the form of economic development which has cultural resources at its foundations and cultural tourism is a form of economic development that, although bound to economic realities, is nonetheless a means by which individuals and societies can obtain meaning and understanding in an intellectual, emotional and spiritual sense by experiencing, learning and enjoying one another's places and pasts. The cultural tourist, as heritage consumer, should be positioned in the center of this effort of capitalizing the cultural heritage passing through the inter-connected stages of heritage cycle proposed by Thurley (2005) – understanding, valuing, caring for and, finally, enjoying it. The connection between cultural heritage, marketing and sustainable development is represented by the way in which cultural heritage may represent a determinant for the sustainable development of the local communities.

2. Methodological Notes

The overall scope of the research was to explore the links between perceived importance, involvement, participation and access related to the cultural heritage in order to assess if local communities grasp and consider the potential of this heritage to support their sustainable development through of an appropriate marketing effort.

The objectives of this exploratory research were to assess the relationships between the perceived importance of the cultural heritage and the level of involvement, level of access; level of participation, and the role of the main actors in relationship to this heritage.

The hypotheses associated with the exploratory research objectives assumed that:

- (1) there should be a significant association between the perceived importance of cultural heritage and the level of involvement in the cultural heritage activities, as a higher importance given should determine a stronger involvement with the cultural heritage;
- (2) there should be a significant association between the perceived importance of cultural heritage and the level of participation in the cultural heritage activities, as a higher importance given should determine an increased participation to the cultural heritage;
- (3) there should be a significant association between the perceived importance of cultural heritage and the level of access to the cultural heritage, as a higher importance given

should determine an increased access to the cultural heritage;

(4) there should be a significant association between the perceived importance of cultural heritage and the role of the main actors to be involved in cultural heritage preservation and capitalization, as an increased importance given to the cultural heritage should be associated with a more important role of the individuals and local communities in preserving, promoting and capitalizing this heritage.

In order to achieve the research objectives and to verify their associated assumptions, a set of research variables was considered:

- perceived importance of the cultural heritage, defined by the specific values measured at personal (variable 2.1.), local community (2.2.), regional (2.3.), country (2.4.) and European Union (2.5.) levels;
- involvement with the cultural heritage, defined and assessed considering the specific ways of living in a historic environment, area, city, or building that is considered as being of cultural heritage value (variable 3.1.), regularly visiting sites or going to events such as monuments, museums, festivals, concerts, etc. (3.2.), doing a traditional activity, such as traditional dancing or singing, playing traditional music, traditional cooking, etc. (3.3.), mastering skills or knowledge related to one or several traditional crafts, such as weaving, decorative art, embroidery, making musical instruments or pottery, etc. (3.4.), voluntarily working for organizations (3.5.) and donating money or other resources (3.6.) to organizations (museums, associations, foundations, etc.) active in the field of cultural heritage and conducting specific activities (such as conserving monuments or paintings, keeping alive traditions, developing education programs, etc.);
- cultural heritage participation, defined and assessed through the cultural activities and their specific frequency (the number of times in the last twelve months): visiting libraries or archives to consult manuscripts, documents, ancient maps, etc. (variable 4.1.); visiting a historical monument or site such as palaces, castles, churches, archaeological sites, gardens, etc. (4.2.); visiting a museum or gallery (4.3.); attending a traditional event such as food festival, carnival, puppet theatre, floral festival, etc. (4.4.); visiting a traditional craft workplace such as weaving, glass blowing, decorative art, embroidery, making musical instruments or pottery, etc. (4.5.); going to the cinema or a film heritage festival to see a classic European film produced at least 10 years ago (4.6.), and seeing a traditional or classical performing arts event such as music, including opera, dance or theatre, folk music, etc. (4.7.);
- cultural heritage access, defined and assessed considering the main barriers of accessing cultural heritage sites and/or activities barriers, such as: lack of interest (variable 5.1.), lack of time (5.2.), cost (5.3.), lack of information (5.4.), lack or limited choice of cultural heritage sites or activities in the area (5.5.), poor quality of cultural heritage sites or activities in the area (5.6.) and remoteness of the cultural heritage sites or activities (5.7.);
- main actors that should do the most to protect Europe's cultural heritage: citizens themselves (variable 13.1), local communities (13.2), local and regional authorities (13.3), national authorities (13.4), the European Union (13.5), schools and universities (13.6), associations, NGOs and charities (13.7.), benefactors and sponsors (13.8.) and private companies (13.9.).

Secondary data about the above-mentioned variables have been collected from the

European Commission's Special Eurobarometer on Cultural Heritage (2017) – and processed using JASP (an open-source project supported by the University of Amsterdam). Pearson correlation coefficients have been determined and a correlation matrix has been established to assess the associations between the investigated variables.

3. Main Findings

For who does the cultural heritage matter – individuals, local communities, local and regional communities, countries or the European Union? At European level, the cultural heritage appears to account the most for the countries followed in descending order by the local and regional, local communities, individuals and, somewhat surprisingly, by the European Union. The good part here is that, overall, cultural heritage is perceived as something between important and very important, which may represent a premise, or even a prerequisite, for the attempts of capitalizing this heritage. The worse is that, although measured at European level, the results indicate the absence of a European pattern as this succession is characteristic for the entire Union and only other four countries – Estonia, Latvia, Finland and United Kingdom.

There are two major patterns describing the order of cultural heritage importance on the scale from individual to European. They have in common the top positions held by countries and regions, and the last position held by the individuals. The single difference is brought by switching positions of the European Union and local communities. In Germany, Spain, Croatia, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, the cultural heritage is more important for the European Union, while in Belgium, Ireland, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden, it is more important for the local communities.

The oppositions in terms of importance between countries and individuals, respectively countries and the European Union are the most contrasting, yet meaningful results. Supremacy of the countries may be seen, on a hand, as a reminiscence of the nation states which have played a decisive role in the modern development and, on the other hand, as a distinctive feature of the European countries. Cultural heritage is strongly connected, therefore it is (or at least should be) very important to the country. This vision, favorable at first sight, creates powerful expectations that public authorities, as representatives of the country, will prove capable to manage effectively the cultural heritage by preserving, promoting and capitalizing it. In real terms, public authorities do not dispose of enough resources – people, money, technology and information – to approach and manage the heritage related challenges.

Involvement with the cultural heritage at the level of the European Union is modest: almost one third of the European heritage consumers visit regularly sites (such as monuments and museums) or go to the events (such as festivals and concerts) while a sixth of them are passively involved by living in a historical environment considered as being of cultural heritage value (and maybe inspiring them to do something cultural). A limited number of Europeans are doing a traditional activity, such as traditional dancing or singing, playing traditional music, traditional cooking, etc. (8 %), mastering skills or knowledge related to one or several traditional crafts, such as weaving, decorative art, embroidery, making musical instruments or pottery, etc. (8 %), donating money and/or

other resources (7 %) or voluntarily work (5 %) for an organization (museums, associations, foundations, etc.) active in the field of cultural heritage and conducting specific activities (e.g. conserving monuments or paintings, keeping alive traditions, developing education programs, etc.).

There have not been identified significant associations between the perceived importance of cultural heritage and any of the ways of cultural involvement (see the Table 1). A higher perceived importance of the cultural heritage does not seem to determine a stronger involvement with the cultural heritage, no matter the levels of importance (personal, local, regional, national or European).

Table 1. Correlation matrix of the perceived importance and involvement with the cultural heritage

	2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	2.5.	3.1.	3.2.	3.3.	3.4.	3.5.	3.6.
2.1.	Pearson's r p-value	— —									
2.2.	Pearson's r p-value	0.820*** < .001	— —								
2.3.	Pearson's r p-value	0.804*** < .001	0.870*** < .001	— —							
2.4.	Pearson's r p-value	0.672*** < .001	0.751*** < .001	0.826*** < .001	— —						
2.5.	Pearson's r p-value	0.589*** < .001	0.783*** < .001	0.748*** < .001	0.649*** < .001	— —					
3.1.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.060 0.758	-0.013 0.945	-0.059 0.763	0.156 0.420	0.005 0.980	— —				
3.2.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.072 0.712	-0.077 0.690	-0.079 0.684	0.256 0.181	-0.189 0.327	0.707*** < .001	— —			
3.3.	Pearson's r p-value	0.053 0.785	0.174 0.366	0.040 0.836	0.275 0.150	0.021 0.916	0.505** 0.005	0.486** 0.007	— —		
3.4.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.117 0.545	-0.116 0.550	-0.255 0.183	0.125 0.519	-0.120 0.535	0.498** 0.006	0.574** 0.001	0.724*** < .001	— —	
3.5.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.134 0.489	0.078 0.687	-0.023 0.907	0.145 0.452	0.069 0.721	0.600*** < .001	0.513** 0.004	0.614*** < .001	0.548** 0.002	— —
3.6.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.131 0.497	0.034 0.859	0.007 0.971	0.178 0.355	0.018 0.928	0.393* 0.035	0.412* 0.026	0.264 0.166	0.334 0.076	0.740*** < .001

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

It is fully understandable that an increased perceived importance could not result in significant improvements in doing traditional activities or mastering skills or knowledge related to the traditional crafts but it could have been expected that a higher level of importance, particularly at personal and local level, should result in an increased amount of experiences with cultural heritage sites and events or maybe an extended support, under the forms of donating money, providing other resources and working voluntarily, given to the organizations active in the field of cultural heritage.

Overall, the participation in the cultural heritage at the level of the European Union is rather modest and significantly differentiated between its main types. Most frequently, European heritage consumers visit historical monuments or sites (61 % did visit palaces, castles, churches, archaeological sites, gardens etc. at least once in the last twelve months), attend traditional events, such as food festivals, carnivals, puppet theatres, floral festivals etc. (52 %) and visit museums or galleries (50 %). Less frequently, they see traditional or classical performing arts events, such as music, including opera, dance or theatre, folk music, etc. (43 %), visit libraries or archives to consult manuscripts, documents, ancient maps, etc. (30 %), visit traditional craft workplaces, such as weaving, glass blowing, decorative art, embroidery, making musical instruments or pottery, etc. (30

%) and go to the cinema to see a film heritage festival or a classic European film produced at least 10 years ago (26 %).

There have not been identified significant associations between the perceived importance of cultural heritage and six out of seven ways of cultural heritage participation. A higher perceived importance of the cultural heritage at personal, local, regional, national or European levels does not seem to determine a more serious participation related to the cultural heritage. The exception is represented by the going to the cinema to see a film heritage festivals or classic European films, that associates significantly and negatively with the personal, local, regional and European levels of importance.

Table 2. Correlation matrix of the perceived importance and participation in the cultural heritage activities

		2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	2.5.	4.1.	4.2.	4.3.	4.4.	4.5.	4.6.	4.7.
2.1.	Pearson's r	—											
	p-value	—											
2.2.	Pearson's r	0.820***	—										
	p-value	< .001	—										
2.3.	Pearson's r	0.804***	0.870***	—									
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—									
2.4.	Pearson's r	0.672***	0.751***	0.826***	—								
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—								
2.5.	Pearson's r	0.589***	0.783***	0.748***	0.649***	—							
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—							
4.1.	Pearson's r	-0.332	-0.251	-0.340	-0.041	-0.264	—						
	p-value	0.079	0.188	0.071	0.831	0.166	—						
4.2.	Pearson's r	-0.106	-0.115	-0.044	0.298	-0.114	0.782***	—					
	p-value	0.584	0.551	0.822	0.117	0.558	< .001	—					
4.3.	Pearson's r	-0.235	-0.243	-0.255	0.091	-0.270	0.843***	0.941***	—				
	p-value	0.221	0.204	0.183	0.638	0.156	< .001	< .001	—				
4.4.	Pearson's r	-0.029	0.085	0.157	0.203	-0.043	0.345	0.523**	0.458*	—			
	p-value	0.881	0.663	0.416	0.290	0.823	0.067	0.004	0.013	—			
4.5.	Pearson's r	-0.184	-0.216	-0.182	0.097	-0.199	0.759***	0.911***	0.921***	0.507**	—		
	p-value	0.339	0.262	0.344	0.617	0.301	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.005	—		
4.6.	Pearson's r	-0.467*	-0.514**	-0.415*	-0.322	-0.484**	0.553**	0.446*	0.521**	0.355	0.530**	—	
	p-value	0.011	0.004	0.025	0.088	0.008	0.002	0.015	0.004	0.059	0.003	—	
4.7.	Pearson's r	-0.342	-0.308	-0.229	0.074	-0.267	0.713***	0.873***	0.864***	0.536**	0.885***	0.555**	—
	p-value	0.070	0.104	0.231	0.702	0.162	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.003	< .001	0.002	—

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

The negative associations observed in the case of the film heritage festivals and classical European movies, as well as the lack of significant associations in the case of the other ways of experiencing cultural heritage, are hard to understand as giving more importance to the cultural heritage at individual, local, regional, national or European levels, should impact positively the participation in the related activities.

Lack of time (37 %), cost (34 %) and lack of interest (31 %) are the main barriers to accessing cultural heritage sites or activities, followed at a significant distance by the lack of information (25 %). Less relevant barriers are the lack or limited choice of cultural heritage sites or activities in the consumers' area (12 %), remoteness of the cultural heritage sites and activities (12 %) and the poor quality of the cultural sites and activities (6 %).

Seen from a marketing perspective, cost may be assimilated to the price heritage consumers should pay in order to experience the cultural heritage goods, services, events and activities, that corresponds to the component “price” of the marketing mix. Lack of information may be assimilated to the communication regarding the cultural heritage goods, services, events and activities addressed to the heritage consumers corresponding to the component “communication” of the marketing mix. Lack or limited choice of cultural heritage sites and activities may be assimilated to the offer of cultural heritage

goods, services, events and activities provided to the heritage consumers corresponding to the component “product” of the marketing mix, while remoteness or the difficulty to access cultural heritage sites and activities may be assimilated to the placement of cultural heritage goods, services, events and activities towards the heritage consumers corresponding to the component “distribution” of the marketing mix. Last but not least, the poor quality of cultural heritage sites and activities may be assimilated to the ways in which providers of cultural heritage goods, services, events and activities employ these elements to generate an overall favorable experience corresponding to the components “personnel”, “physical evidence” and “processes” of the extended marketing mix.

Without to be associated to a certain component of the marketing mix, lack of time and lack of interest to access cultural heritage sites and activities may be seen as negative consequences of an overall marketing activity failing to draw attention, create interest, generate desire and making the consumer to act experiencing a valuable cultural heritage offer including goods, services, events and activities that are purposefully designed, reasonably priced, conveniently located and meaningfully communicated.

Analysis of the associations between the participation and the barriers of accessing cultural heritage reveals the positioning of the cost and the poor quality of cultural heritage sites or activities as main barriers in experiencing historical monuments and sites, museums and galleries, traditional craft workplaces and traditional or classical performing arts events.

Table 3. Correlation matrix of participation and barriers to access cultural heritage

	4.1.	4.2.	4.3.	4.4.	4.5.	4.6.	4.7.	5.1.	5.2.	5.3.	5.4.	5.5.	5.6.	5.7.
4.1.	Pearson's r p-value	— —												
4.2.	Pearson's r p-value	0.782*** < .001	— —											
4.3.	Pearson's r p-value	0.843*** < .001	0.941*** < .001	— —										
4.4.	Pearson's r p-value	0.345 0.067	0.523** 0.004	0.458* 0.013	— —									
4.5.	Pearson's r p-value	0.759*** < .001	0.911*** < .001	0.921*** < .001	0.507** 0.005	— —								
4.6.	Pearson's r p-value	0.553** 0.002	0.446* 0.015	0.521** 0.004	0.355 0.059	0.530** 0.003	— —							
4.7.	Pearson's r p-value	0.713*** < .001	0.873*** < .001	0.864*** < .001	0.536** 0.003	0.885*** < .001	0.555** 0.002	— —						
5.1.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.278 0.145	-0.378* 0.043	-0.374* 0.046	-0.017 0.930	-0.308 0.104	0.029 0.881	-0.262 0.170	— —					
5.2.	Pearson's r p-value	0.103 0.594	0.279 0.142	0.194 0.314	0.050 0.797	0.180 0.350	-0.044 0.819	0.186 0.333	-0.281 0.139	— —				
5.3.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.580*** < .001	-0.646*** < .001	-0.574** 0.001	-0.285 0.134	-0.644*** < .001	-0.140 0.468	-0.523** 0.004	0.108 0.575	-0.173 0.371	— —			
5.4.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.239 0.213	-0.294 0.122	-0.294 0.122	-0.051 0.793	-0.186 0.335	-0.058 0.766	-0.248 0.195	0.480** 0.007	0.055 0.778	0.110 0.572	— —		
5.5.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.284 0.136	-0.441* 0.017	-0.357 0.057	-0.279 0.143	-0.377* 0.044	-0.206 0.284	-0.321 0.090	0.114 0.557	-0.118 0.540	0.213 0.268	0.244 0.202	— —	
5.6.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.353 0.061	-0.583*** < .001	-0.504** 0.005	-0.240 0.211	-0.435* 0.018	-0.139 0.472	-0.372* 0.047	0.147 0.446	-0.160 0.407	0.193 0.317	0.273 0.153	0.622*** < .001	— —
5.7.	Pearson's r p-value	-0.050 0.798	-0.070 0.718	0.029 0.882	-0.240 0.210	-0.010 0.961	-0.100 0.606	0.157 0.415	-0.139 0.473	-0.039 0.841	0.293 0.122	0.026 0.894	0.378* 0.043	0.292 0.124

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Lack of interest represents a significant barrier in accessing historical sites and monuments, respectively museums and galleries, while traditional craft workplaces are less accessed even due to the lack or limited choice of sites or activities in the heritage consumer's area. Somewhat surprisingly, attending traditional events and going to the cinema to see film heritage festivals or classic European movies are not affected significantly by any of the assessed barriers. Even more surprisingly, lack of time – the main barrier in the access of the cultural heritage – does not associates significantly with

any of the ways of cultural heritage participation suggesting that it was mentioned mainly due to its convenience.

Protecting the cultural heritage plays a crucial role in the future actions to be conducted to restore, preserve, maintain and capitalize this heritage. According to the European heritage consumers, national authorities (indicated by 46 % of them) should do the most to protect Europe's cultural heritage, accompanied by the European Union (40 %), local and regional authorities (39 %) and individuals (34 %). Local communities (29 %) were given a rather peripheral position, slightly more important than those of the schools and universities (25 %), benefactors and sponsors (19 %), NGOs, associations and charities (17 %) and private companies (14 %).

The fact that Europeans heritage consumers expect the State (represented by the public authorities at the national level) to do the most for the protection of the cultural heritage corresponds to its perceived importance: if this heritage is the most important for the country, then the country should do the most to protect it! More the State should not limit its intervention just to the protection, but also to the ways in which this heritage is managed and capitalized. Citizens themselves and local communities are the least expected to contribute in this respect which express, on a hand (the light side), that, although located locally, the cultural heritage has a national, regional or even European significance and, on the other hand (the dark side), that local communities do not have the means (particularly financial ones) to safeguard and capitalize the cultural heritage.

Analysis of the associations between the perceived importance and the main role players in the cultural heritage protection reveals that where cultural heritage is perceived as being the most important for individuals and local communities, there are expectations to see citizens themselves and local communities playing a major role in the protection of cultural heritage. The regional importance is significantly associated with the intervention of the national authorities, national importance with the interventions of the national authorities but, also, of the citizens themselves, while the European importance with the interventions of the local communities.

Table 4. Correlation matrix of perceived importance and main actors involved in cultural heritage protection

		2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	2.5.	13.1.	13.2.	13.3.	13.4.	13.5.
2.1.	Pearson's r	—									
	p-value	—									
2.2.	Pearson's r	0.820***	—								
	p-value	< .001	—								
2.3.	Pearson's r	0.804***	0.870***	—							
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—							
2.4.	Pearson's r	0.672***	0.751***	0.826***	—						
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—						
2.5.	Pearson's r	0.589***	0.783***	0.748***	0.649***	—					
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—					
13.1.	Pearson's r	0.496**	0.373*	0.366	0.467*	0.263	—				
	p-value	0.006	0.046	0.051	0.011	0.168	—				
13.2.	Pearson's r	0.347	0.579***	0.342	0.268	0.513**	0.356	—			
	p-value	0.066	< .001	0.070	0.159	0.004	0.058	—			
13.3.	Pearson's r	-0.016	0.065	0.105	0.202	0.117	0.403*	0.092	—		
	p-value	0.933	0.736	0.590	0.294	0.544	0.030	0.636	—		
13.4.	Pearson's r	0.315	0.307	0.405*	0.531**	0.307	0.553**	0.154	0.825***	—	
	p-value	0.096	0.105	0.029	0.003	0.105	0.002	0.424	< .001	—	
13.5.	Pearson's r	0.050	0.004	0.153	0.205	0.281	0.387*	-0.010	0.370*	0.445*	—
	p-value	0.797	0.982	0.427	0.286	0.139	0.038	0.960	0.048	0.015	—

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Other relevant insights suggest that a higher perceived importance of the cultural heritage at individual and local communities' levels associates significantly with an expected intervention from the part of schools and universities, associations, NGOs and charities, benefactors and sponsors, and private companies. While schools and universities are expected to play a more important in the protection of the cultural heritage regardless its perceived importance, associations, NGOs and charities are expected to intervene at regional level, while benefactors and sponsors only in the cases of the cultural heritage that is important at the European level.

4. Conclusions

Relationships between the local communities and the cultural heritage are far enough from suggesting that heritage plays a significant position in the daily life of these communities and contributes in a relevant manner to their sustainable development. There are several reasons standing behind this situation:

- European citizens, potential cultural heritage consumers, do not perceive cultural heritage as being important for themselves or for their local communities, or at least not as important as it is for the country or the region. Although the higher importance given at the individual and local community levels is significantly associated with an extended intervention of the citizens themselves and local communities, the main expectations for doing the most are related to the national authorities;
- at the level of the European Union, involvement with the cultural heritage is modest and there are no significant associations between the perceived importance and any of the ways of cultural involvement. Hence the need for more education of the cultural heritage consumers in order to facilitate the ways in which they can become more involved with the cultural heritage and, thus, contribute to its employment as a major resource to be preserved, promoted and capitalized in order to support the sustainable development of the local communities;
- participation in cultural heritage related activities is rather modest, experiences with historical monuments or sites, traditional events, museums or galleries being more frequent by comparison to those with traditional or classical performing arts events, libraries or archives, traditional craft workplaces or film heritage festivals. There are other reasons than the importance associated to the cultural heritage that make consumers to choose from the different ways of experiencing this heritage they were not convinced by the fact that heritage matters for them, their communities, regions, countries or the whole Europe;
- in marketing terms, cost and lack of information represent the major barriers in accessing cultural heritage, while lack or limited choice of cultural heritage sites or activities in the area, respectively the remoteness of the cultural heritage sites and activities are rather minor difficulties in this respect. The marketing mix of the cultural heritage sites and activities should focus on making the right decisions in terms of pricing (considering the consumers' willingness to pay) and communication (addressing appropriate audiences in appropriate ways) taking also into consideration the overall quality of the related cultural heritage experience given by the personnel, physical evidence and processes.

Although sustainable development is generally defined, assessed and approached at the level of the overall economy and society, a more appropriate approach should be implemented focusing on the local communities and individuals due to their particular positions of administrators, respectively consumers of the cultural heritage, and, nonetheless, their common roles of participants in the sustainable development initiatives.

Therefore, local communities, by their members, should be actively involved in the restoration, preservation, promotion and capitalization of the local tangible and/or intangible cultural heritage aiming to grow in a sustainable manner. Still, including individuals for which cultural heritage is important, but not as it is for the regions or for the country, the local communities are quite at the periphery: they cannot mobilize their members to get more involved in the cultural heritage activities nor can expect a real support from the state. This situation makes some room for entrepreneurial initiatives in the area of cultural heritage activities and participation but their extent is limited either by the low interest of the public, the limited amount of the financial resources used to support these projects and, last but not least the lack or limited marketing vision.

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