

THE ROLE OF THE RESTORATION OF THE BUILT HERITAGE OF AN AREA IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA'S TOURIST SERVICES

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Abstract: Heritage is an asset that marks our existence, because it is everything that our ancestors considered so precious that they thought it good to leave it to us as a legacy, to enjoy it. Heritage is proving to be an ideal resource for sustainable development-especially for local communities-provided we know how to value it. The reason why heritage- natural and cultural-is so valued is its uniqueness. However, an entire branch of the economy also gains from the development of intangible heritage conservation centers: tourism.

Key words: heritage, ideal resource, sustainable development, tourism

INTRODUCTION

Culture is highly valued in all European regions and cities, both by local people and visitors. Cultural heritage is a key element of their image and identity. Cultural tourism accounts for 40% of all tourism activities in Europe. [10,13,16]

Cultural heritage plays a key role in sustainable and inclusive development and can contribute to the revitalisation of cities and regions. The European Union (EU) works with cities and regions to provide financial support for culture, raise awareness of the potential of culture and cultural heritage, and develop integrated strategies through a range of instruments. [1,5,11,12]

Could we imagine an area without the cultural heritage it possesses? Would we be able to know our past without its man-made heritage?

We know that the word "heritage" is very closely related to another word or term that is often used as a synonym, and this word is the word "inheritance". From a historical point of view, we can say that the meaning of inheritance is supported by the following statement "the transfer of property from father to son". Therefore, heritage is understood, by a classic definition, as "the set of goods and rights inherited from parents".

For a long time, people were content to simply admire paintings for their beauty, to memorize traditional songs because, in this way, they felt that they belonged to a community, to protect the natural environment, understanding that whenever a forest, a lake or the "home" of some plants or animals is destroyed, it ends up harming humanity itself and endangering life. [2,6]

For several decades, people have understood that all this is not enough and that heritage has another purpose, which we did not think much about before. It is about the support that heritage can provide us for economic development. [3,18]

Over centuries of "civilization", people have learned that in order to live better, more comfortably, they must develop the economy. [7,14,15]



Figure 1. Looking to the future

Source: own creation

Heritage proves to be an ideal resource for sustainable development-especially for local communities-provided we know how to value it.

The reason why heritage-natural and cultural-is so valued is its uniqueness.

If, in terms of natural heritage, it seems understandable that every place in the world is unique, when it comes to cultural heritage, things are not as obvious.

At this moment, modern technologies are capable of producing, on a large scale, exact reproductions of original objects. However, the value is not given by the copy, but by the original. [7,8,17,18]

However, an entire branch of the economy is also gaining from the development of centers for the conservation of intangible heritage: tourism.

ourism has differentiated itself through several ways of practicing it over the last century, but the category that has experienced the fastest rise is cultural tourism.

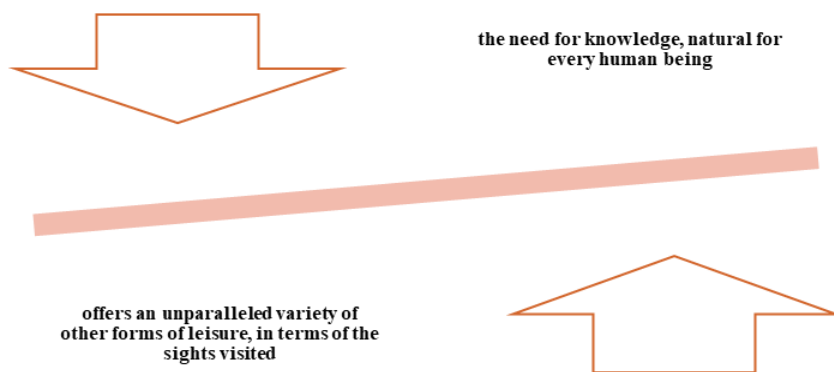


Figure 2. Reasons why cultural tourism has grown so rapidly

Source: own creation

It is certain that a vacation that combines the beauty of the landscapes with the enrichment of knowledge cannot be boring. [9,13]

But, in order for success to be guaranteed and for us, as tourists, to leave satisfied and, moreover, to want to return to the places we visited, it is necessary that those who make our tourist offer know how to combine investments in heritage with investments in the infrastructure that tourists need (transport, accommodation, restaurants, spaces where spending time can guarantee personal safety).

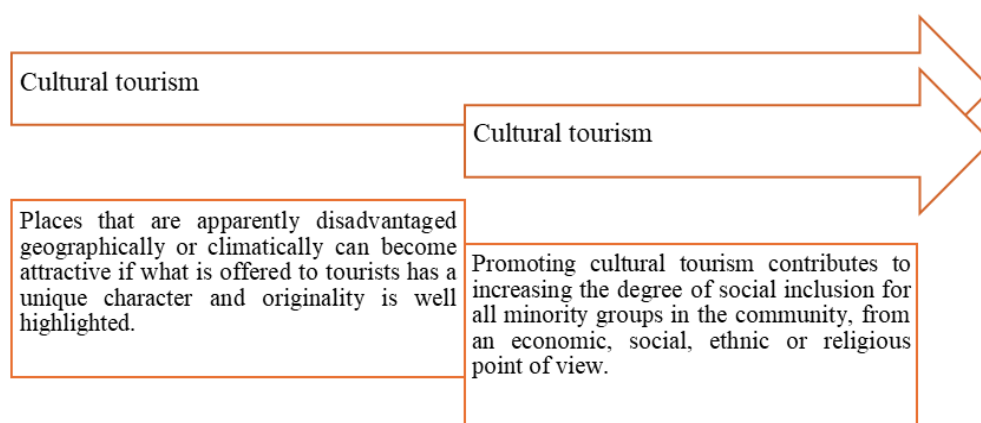


Figure 3. The role of cultural tourism

Source: own creation

The reinterpretation and integration of historical monuments into the life of society is an important and topical task of the valorization of built heritage, which begins with the presentation and promotion of said monuments. An increasing number of retroceded and/or partially/totally restored historical monuments are seeking their place and role in the life of larger or smaller communities, and their authentic presentation is the responsibility of art historians and tourist guides. [3,9,13]

If we protect our natural and cultural heritage and invest in tourism (but in a responsible manner, so as not to deplete natural resources), we have the chance to enjoy a more beautiful and prosperous life. [10,15,16]

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Knowing all this, we wanted to identify the role of the restoration of built heritage in the development and promotion of tourism in a certain area. In order to achieve our goal, we decided to use the creation of a questionnaire, a questionnaire that we promoted among friends, acquaintances, relatives, people with various levels of training, from different social backgrounds and with various age categories. To our pleasant surprise, the questionnaire enjoyed great interest, being completed over five months (December 2023-April 2024) by a few 575 people from the Municipality of Arad and the Municipality of Oradea.

RESEARCH RESULTS

We will now present the interpretations of the responses received following the application of the questionnaire, as follows.

There are multiple aspects regarding the restoration of the cultural heritage of an area that should be taken into account. Some of the most important of these seem to us to be those mentioned in the second question of our questionnaire and which were ranked according to the answers of the interviewees and the importance they gave them.



Figure 4. The objective chosen by the respondents following the restoration of a built heritage

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

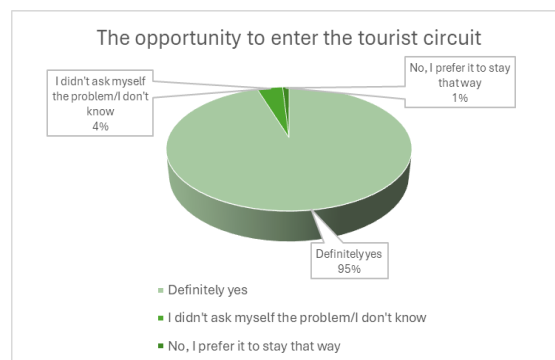


Figure 5. The opportunity to enter the tourist circuit

As we can see, the respondents chose as their objective the one they would confer if they had a built cultural heritage to confer upon it following its renovation. We can see that all of them chose as their answer one of the answers that would place the objective in the tourist circuit.

By choosing our predefined answers to the question, we left it up to the respondents to choose the option by which they would choose the way in which they would like the heritage object they own to be included in the country's cultural heritage.

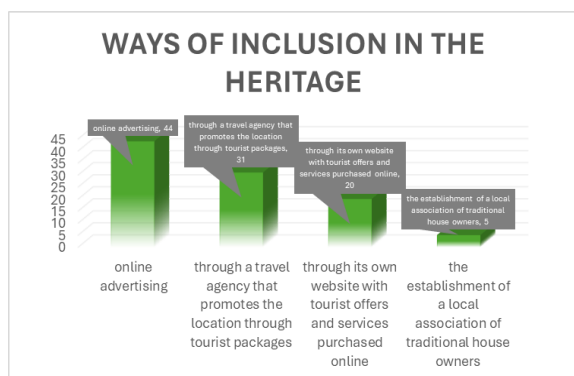


Figure 6. Ways of inclusion in the heritage

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

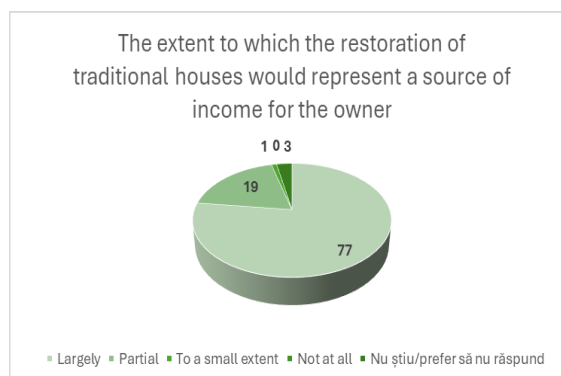


Figure 7. The extent to which respondents consider that the renovation of traditional houses could constitute a source of income for its owner

Almost all those who completed the questionnaire and answered its questions believe that the restoration of existing traditional houses constitutes a source of income for those who own this dwelling. Only three people preferred not to answer and there was no negative response.

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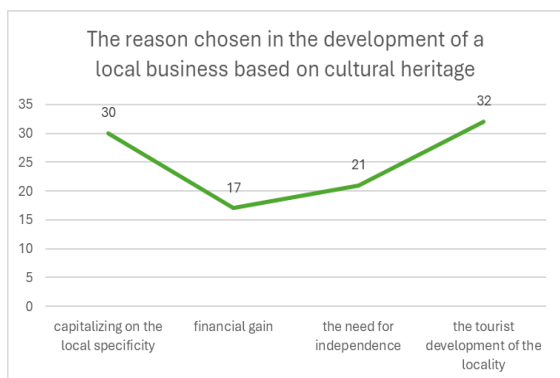


Figure 8. The reason chosen in the development of a local business based on cultural heritage

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

We find that the main reason chosen in developing a local business based on cultural heritage is the tourist development of the locality, closely followed by the valorization of local specificity, which leads us to the idea of awareness that the well-being of a locality is the trigger factor for personal well-being, as long as you want it and put your shoulder to the development of the locality. And the creation of some independence is a factor worthy of consideration. Few are those who have chosen financial gain.

Opinions regarding the reason for not investing in local cultural or traditional heritage seem to be unanimous for most of the respondents, who consider that there is no interest in such a thing. Some believe that this is costly.

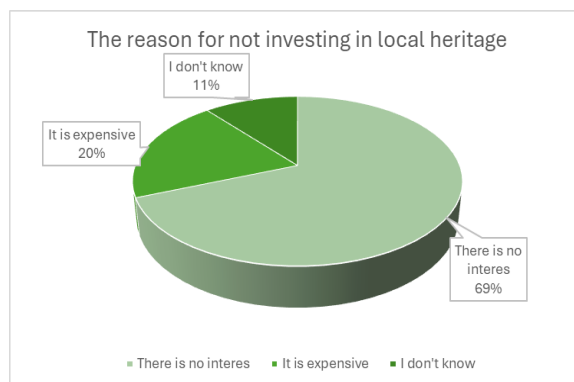


Figure 9. The reason for not investing in local heritage

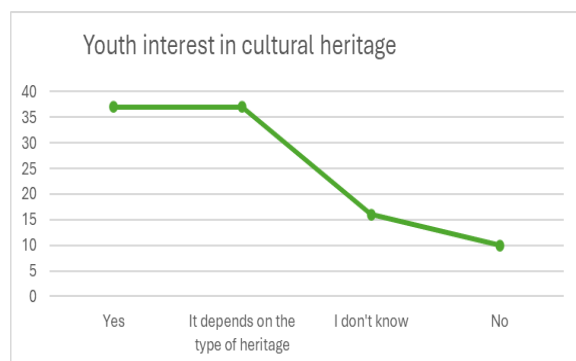


Figure 10. Youth interest in cultural heritage

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

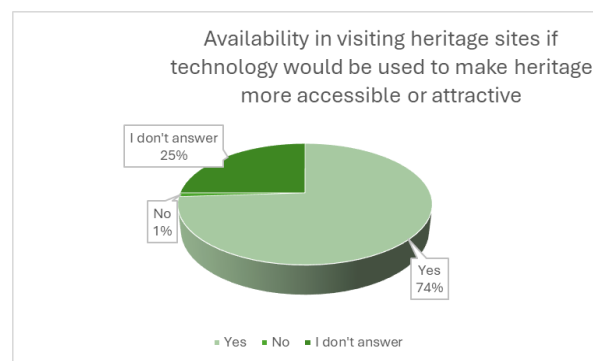


Figure 11. Availability in visiting heritage sites if technology (Artificial Intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, haptic technology, etc.) would be used to make the heritage more accessible or attractive

The younger generation proves to be interested in the preservation and restoration of the country's cultural heritage, an aspect highlighted in the previous figure, even if some of them are only interested in a certain type of heritage.

Although the world, especially the youth, is captivated and dependent on the existence of devices, according to the information obtained from the answers to the question whose interpretation is shown in the figure above, nevertheless the technology represented by Artificial Intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, haptic technology would not be an impediment to personally visiting heritage sites.

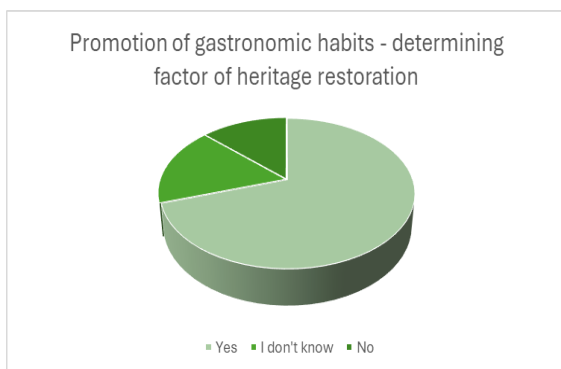


Figure 12. Promoting the gastronomic habits of the area - a determining factor in the restoration of the heritage

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

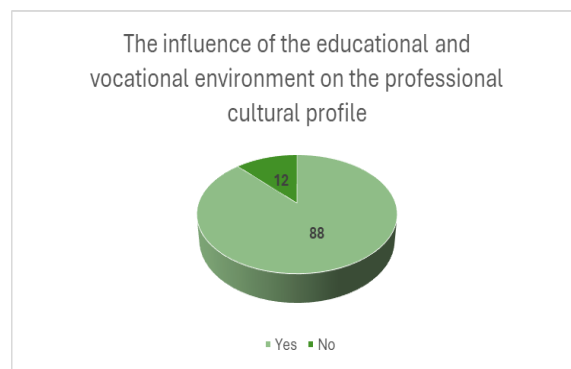


Figure 13. The influence of the educational and vocational environment on the professional cultural profile

The vast majority of those who answered our questions agree that promoting the gastronomic customs of the area could be a determining factor in restoring the area's cultural heritage.

We also wanted to highlight the educational and vocational importance of the individual on the cultural and professional profile of the residents of the area of interest.

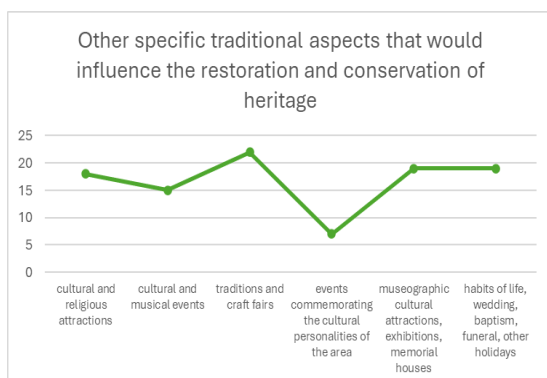


Figure 14. Other specific traditional aspects that could influence heritage conservation and restoration

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

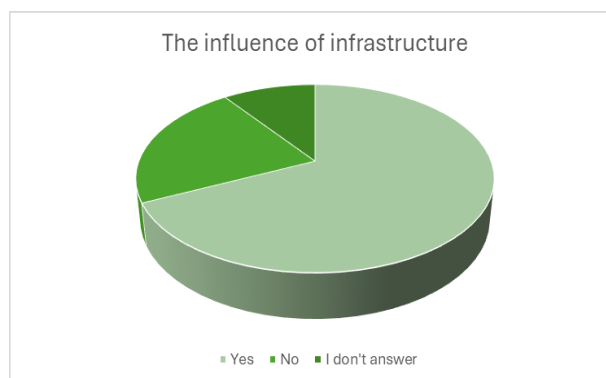


Figure 15. The influence of infrastructure on heritage conservation

We wanted to find out if other specific traditional aspects besides gastronomic customs could have an influence on the conservation and restoration of local cultural heritage. In the respondents' opinions, traditions and craft fairs hold an important place, followed by cultural, museographic attractions, exhibitions, memorial houses of the area, life customs, weddings, baptisms, funerals and other celebrations of the area's inhabitants, some religious attractions or cultural and musical manifestations.

Poor quality infrastructure can be an impediment to the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage.

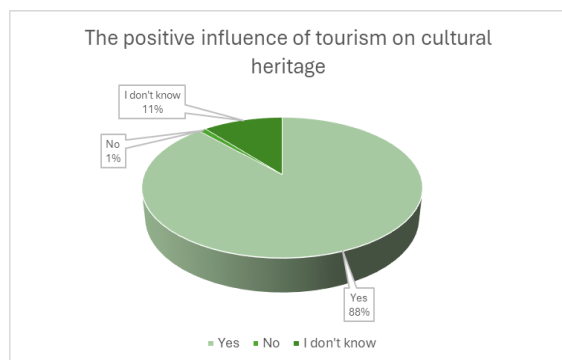


Figure 16. The positive influence of tourism on cultural heritage

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire



Figure 17. The influence of tourism on heritage - aspects

Tourism in areas with cultural potential can have a positive impact on heritage conservation and restoration.

We tried to take a look at some of the positive aspects that tourism could have on the cultural heritage of an area. An important aspect is that it could lead locals to preserve and appreciate the heritage and help tourists learn more about the heritage, traditions, culture.

CONCLUSIONS

From the perspective of cultural heritage, we can say that tourism is the one whose extraordinary position in its promotion holds the special opportunity of communicator, of valuing and interpreting, of expanding the cultural impact significantly beyond the community and the local public. The specific approaches, their optimization in parallel with their coordination, coordination specific to each sector are essential elements in order to build viable cultural tourist offers, competitive domestically and internationally.

Heritage is what gives primacy to the place, including all the history and stories of that place. If the spirit of an area is lost, it may increase its value in the short term but will decrease in the long term with the decay of new buildings. The disappearance of the last old trees will be completed with the concrete desert in which the value of a square meter will decrease.

Any rickety building with good will can be transformed into a unique gem, and all it takes is a little effort, a lot of love and renovation. What would the great old cities look like without those historical ones? Would they still be considered magnificent? Real estate is not clothes that we change as we please and when we are not bored with them we throw them in the trash. Real estate is a real resource with a long lifespan, and the reality is that you can live very modernly in historic, traditional spaces.

Depending on the cultural strength of an area, tourism can have different effects on both cultural and social aspects of the area, consistent with the cultural and religious strength of the area.

If we don't take care of the monuments in the localities where we live, they will collapse, and we will know much less about the way of life of those who built them and, last but not least, we will know almost nothing about our own identity: who we are, what makes us different from those in other regions, countries and continents.

Often, living better depends on each of us. There are numerous examples, throughout the world, but also in Romania, which show that if we protect our natural and cultural heritage and invest in tourism (but in a responsible manner, so as not to deplete natural resources), we have the chance to enjoy a more beautiful and prosperous life.

It depends on each of us to protect our heritage and, if we know how to invest intelligently in it and make it known, to live better.

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