The *Fiesta of the Patios:* Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Cordoba, Spain

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ABSTRACT

The inscription of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) by UNESCO has a broad reflection on the cultural and tourism industry, and it occasionally involves a significant economic development in the area that houses that heritage. In this paper we present a study of the *Fiesta of the Patios* (Festival of the Courtyards) in Cordoba, Spain, recognised as ICH by UNESCO, and its relationship to tourism development in the city. The methodology used in this research involved conducting a survey of tourists who attended the Festival in order to know their profile, knowledge thereof, their rating on it and degree of satisfaction. This research shows the significant economic impact of this ICH in the city, mostly related to cultural heritage and tourism. The study highlights the relationship between culture and tourism, the significant economic impact, the positive opinion of the tourists surveyed with the *Fiesta of the Patios* and the high level of satisfaction of the visitors.

Keywords

Heritage Tourism, Motivation, Satisfaction, Tourist, Economic Development, Spain, Cordoba, *Fiesta of the Patios*

Introduction

The inscription of the *Fiesta of the Patios* in Cordoba as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2012 should be an important incentive for the conservation of this intangible cultural heritage, and at the same time should make it possible for the celebration to last longer and attract more visitors. This inscription supplements the two World Heritage sites in the city which were previously recognised by UNESCO, namely, the Mosque and its Old Quarter (the Jewish Quarter). Additionally, it will strengthen this tradition, making it more visible to the citizens. Efforts have also been made to increase the capacity of each courtyard to host visitors, making the visitor experience more enjoyable and enabling the *Fiesta* to run as smoothly as possible.

The relationship between tourism and heritage has allowed the development of certain geographical areas (Keitumetse and Nthoi: 2009) and the development of intangible heritage is enabling the emergence of new destinations as territorial resources (Lenzerini: 2011) that can attract tourists, encourage citizens to return for specific events, and generate both local and foreign investment. Heritage tourism can also create jobs, albeit temporary, and generally has a positive effect on an area's economy. (Olivera: 2011), which has been the subject of many studies in the field (Vidal Gonzalez: 2008). There is clear evidence to suggest that UNESCO recognition of an ICH element brings more tourists to the area where it is located.

The aim of this paper is to present the results of a study that addresses the existing relationship between tourism and the ICH of the *Fiesta of the Patios* in Cordoba, Spain. This study analyses the social and demographic profile of the visitors who do not live in the area, how they learnt about the *Fiesta*, their assessment of certain aspects of their experience and their overall level of satisfaction.

Literature

The concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage raised serious issues even before the adoption of the *International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Kurin: 2004), although there is currently a clear idea that the ICH is non-physical heritage such as folklore, traditional knowledge, dance, oral traditions, and masterpieces of intangible heritage (Pan, Shizhou, and Crone: 2007). On the other hand, and through the establishment of procedures to recognise and safeguard ICH, efforts are being made to fight against counterfeiting of cultural elements in languages, history or music (Brown: 2013). Focusing on the relationship between tourism and ICH, heritage tourism refers to visiting certain places and experiences (Nguyen and Cheung: 2014), because the visitor is looking for a connection to the area's heritage and history (Remoaldo, Vareiro, Ribeiro, and Santos: 2014) and this means that sometimes, the designation of WHS or ICH is perceived as a brand (Timothy: 2011) or label (Yang, Lin, and Han: 2010), and this recognition recommends the site to tourists (Poria, Reichel, and Cohen: 2013). Let us remember that tourists come looking for authentic experiences and exceptional places (Timothy and Boyd: 2006), experiences that sometimes are difficult to achieve due to the high number of tourists in a specific area.

ICH has been closely examined in two recent books. Stefano, David, and Corsane (2012) address the conceptual aspect of the term and show different case studies in various areas of the world. Meanwhile, Dorfman (2012) analyses the study of natural intangible heritage from three perspectives: the philosophical and conceptual discussion of this term, the analysis of the relationship between natural intangible heritage and territory, and the presentation of different case studies. According to Del Barrio (2012), the concept of cultural heritage has changed in the last few years. Firstly, the list of items considered to be heritage has grown; secondly, cultural elements of an immaterial nature have come to form part of the list of items included in cultural heritage. Identifying and understanding the different types of tourists seeking to discover heritage legacy, their motivations, behaviours, perceptions and experiences will help in the better management of destinations and in creating strategies towards this goal. Thus, according to Vong and Ung (2012), there are four factors related to heritage tourism: history and culture, ease and quality of services in cultural sites, heritage interpretation and heritage attractions.

Currently, there are two main lines of research in heritage tourism (Su and Wall: 2011). First, there is the definition and categorisation of heritage legacy and heritage tourism; second, the relationship between the preservation of heritage legacy and the development of

tourism. For Timothy and Boyd (2003), there are two ways of approaching the question of what heritage tourism is. First, the presence of visitors in places where historical monuments are displayed or in locations classified as heritage sites. Second, there is the perception of the place in relation to the actual cultural identity of the visitor. This implies, according to Poria, Reichel, and Biran (2006), that visiting historic sites may not only be a recreational experience but also a way of understanding the heritage legacy given to that space by each individual.

The relationship between tourism and ICH is very strong and complex because cultural tourism, which addresses the experience of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, is an increasingly extended segment of the market that allows for sustainable development, and therefore, sustainable cultural tourism (UNESCO: 2007; UNWTO: 2012). Cultural tourism based on both World Heritage Sites (WHS) and, more recently, on elements of ICH that have been analysed in different studies. For example, in relation to the WHS, we find studies in Botswana (Keitumetse and Nthoi: 2009), Israel (Poria *et al.*: 2013), Malaysia (Jaafar, Tambi, Sa´adin, and Husain: 2014), Portugal (Lourenço-Gomes, Costa Pino, and Rebelo: 2014), St. Lucia (Nicholas and Thapa: 2010), or Taiwan (Chen and Chen: 2010). Furthermore, studies have also been performed based on the relationship between tourism and ICH. Rodzi, Kaki, and Subli (2013) and Bakar, Osman, Machok, and Ibrahim (2014) presented research undertaken in Malacca, Malaysia, focused on the wide variety of multicultural activities in the local community there. Gómez Schettini, Almirón, and González Bracco (2011) identify tango as a tourist resource in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Bille (2012) examines the Bedouin of Petra and Wadi Rum in Jordan as ICH and their relationship with tourism and the inscription of the city of Petra as WHS. Schmitt (2008) analyses the Jemaa el Fna Square in Marrakech, Morocco. Aoyama (2009) develops synergies between tourism and flamenco as ICH in the region of Andalusia, Spain. On the other hand, potential ICH candidates are also presented in the scientific literature. For example, Howell (2013) shows a report on Wales as being a potential candidate of ICH; Horjan (2011) establishes the potential of museums in the cross-border area of Croatia and Slovenia, and Soma and Sukhee (2014) write about the Golden Eagle Festivals of Western Mongolia. Kato (2006) shows the influence between ICH and natural heritage in Shirakani-Sanchior while Cheung (2013) presents three examples of Chinese cuisine - freshwater fish farming, the retail network and all that involves, and recipes as heritage, including home-cooking and secret family recipes.

The *Fiesta of the Patios*

The *Fiesta of the Patios*, declared ICH by UNESCO in 2012, is celebrated during the month of May in Cordoba, Spain. It has its origins in the architecture of the houses with courtyards (*patios*) that are collective dwellings inhabited by several families who share a common courtyard, [Plates 1, 2, and 3] sometimes with a well that collected rainwater, and which is ornamented with all sorts of floral plants which create a feeling of freshness to mitigate the hot dry climate of the city. The origin of this type of housing, according to IESA (Scientific Research Institute specialising in the Social Sciences) (2009), though it's early form already existed in the Middle Ages, was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in response to the housing needs of people who moved to the city from the countryside. This type of house was well-adapted to the prevailing social and economic situation of Cordoba (IESA, 2009). When the spring arrives, the residents who live in the houses create a cultural space in the patios where the *Fiesta* is celebrated. The ritual festive events are accompanied in the patios and adjoining public spaces, streets and squares, by traditional singing, flamenco, guitar playing, and dancing, and collective activities. Similarly, and in relation to the promotion of the *Fiesta of the Patios*, there are different events. The most important and oldest event (dating from 1921) is the Local Patios Competition which promotes the decoration of the patios, for example with plants and flowers, and the recognition of the communities involved. Since 1956 the Festival of the Patios has promoted the representation of the patios, as cultural spaces, and of traditional local folklore singing, guitar playing and dancing. Nowadays, other competitions, like photography and painting have been added to the *Fiesta*. Following *López* and Ruiz (2013) this type of festival has an important social character fulfilling three different dimensions: a) the historical roots of the celebration and its implications in the collective memory of the community; b) the centrality of the phenomenon within the social identification process, and c) the different forms of social engagement which the festival promotes. [Plates 4 and 5]



Plate 1
Different types of flowers on display in a patio.
Photo: Authors, May 2016.



Plate 2
The splendour of spring in Córdoba: water and flowers.
Photo: Authors, May 2016.



Plate 3
The splendour of spring in Córdoba: water and flowers.
Photo: Authors, May 2016.



Plate 4
Traditional decoration of a patio in Cordoba using different types of flowers.
Photo: Authors, May 2016.



Plate 5
Preparing for the festival. The cultural space where the *Fiesta* is celebrated and prepared - the Cordovan patios - is created from one day to the next, through inherited tradition and the creativity of individual residents.
Photo: UNESCO, Córdoba (ESP) / Rafael Morales Ruiz. Ayuntamiento de Córdoba.

It is in the courtyards where residents, together with their families and friends, get together and turn these places into collective recreation areas where they talk, eat and drink. UNESCO states that the *Fiesta of the Patios* of Cordoba promotes the role of these spaces as places of intercultural encounter between people, and fosters a sustainable and collective way of life, based on the establishment of strong linkages and networks of solidarity and exchanges between neighbours, while encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and respect for nature. In this public space, traditions and oral expressions take place in two different contexts: everyday life and competition. The everyday life context involves both sociability and privacy, while the competition between different patios only affects the social aspect. In each of these contexts, habits that are clearly related to oral expressions are developed. Thus, the courtyards are places of day-to-day informal meetings, common areas of work for neighbours and relatives, places for children to play, places the public visit when the patios are entered in a competition and a place to hold private rites and ceremonies. This implies that in the courtyards, oral expression and, consequently, sociability, conversation and friendships (IESA, 2009) are developed. Furthermore, the patio becomes a meeting place for different generations to exchange information. [Plates 6, 7 and 8]



Plate 6
Participating in the festival. The *Fiesta of the Patios*, the unique result of the symbiosis between community and nature, announces spring every May and recalls its values: hospitality, respect, equality, solidarity and sustainability.
Photo: UNESCO, Córdoba (ESP) / Asociación Claveles y Gitanillas.



Plate 7
Participating in the festival.
Photo: Authors, May 2016.



Plate 8
Participating in the festival.
Photo: Authors, May 2016.



Plate 9
Transmitting knowledge to future generations. From grandparents to grandchildren, almost like a game, any family occasion in the patios is perfect for transmitting the essence and values of the *Fiesta of the Patios*.
Photo: UNESCO, Córdoba (ESP) / Rafael Barón.

The economic impact of the *Fiesta* in 2013 was estimated at about 6 million Euros, with approximately 80,000 visitors recorded, of whom 52% were tourists (F. and J. Martin, 2013). The number of courtyards open to the public in 2014 was 65, grouped into six routes that were distributed throughout different areas of the city. Access was completely free for visitors. However, the impact of the flow of tourists through the courtyards, especially in some of them, during the two weekends of the *Fiesta*, is quite problematic, although efforts have been made to avoid large crowds by limiting the visitor numbers in public areas. In fact, one of the most necessary, and debated, elements is in fact to determine how best to do this – in other words, how can we ensure this form of tourism is sustainable? An advance ticketing system has been used to date – the tickets are free but it is essential to have one to access the patios. These tickets can be acquired on the internet. Around one million people now visit Cordoba every year, many interested in experiencing both its Intangible Heritage and its World Heritage Sites. (National Statistics Institute–NSI-2014).

The inscription of the *Fiesta of the Patios* as ICH has made it better known at regional, national and international levels. However, the people who inhabit these houses are ageing, and as younger people are moving out to new developments around the city of Córdoba, this was beginning to cause problems in the transmission of the tradition. Furthermore, this inscription has encouraged the public authorities to give grants to the patios themselves as well as to the association of residents that manages this festival. It has also been used to promote this tradition within the local community, especially to younger people who are often less interested in cultural traditions, so that they now know more about their own local culture and are involved in its preservation. [Plate 9]

Methodology

This research was based on fieldwork to determine the social and demographic profile of the visitors, the ways they heard about the *Fiesta*, and how tourists visiting Cordoba in May 2014 rated their experience and their level of satisfaction with it. The *Fiesta of the Patios* was held in 2014 between May 5th and 18th. To carry out this research, a survey was conducted on those tourists who had visited at least two courtyards within the defined area. The structure of the survey was based on various previous studies (Chen and Chen: 2010; Lourenço-Gomes *et al.*: 2014; Nicholas and Thapa: 2010).

The surveys were conducted between 7th and 18th of May 2014. Participants completed survey forms independently, although the interviewers were present in case they had any kind of difficulty in filling them in. The survey, which was completely anonymous, was carried out in Spanish, English, French and German. Previously, on the 5th and 6th of May, a test-run of 30 surveys had been conducted to detect possible deviations and errors. The total number of questionnaires obtained was 960.

The questions used in the survey are intended to respond to the indicators and measures proposed for carrying out the analysis of the application. Thus, a combination of technical issues were used through a Likert 5-point scale to judge the opinion of the visitor, both yes/no answers and open and closed questions, where the participating tourists were able to comment about their experience in Cordoba, were used. In total there were 80,000 visitors, of whom approximately 52% were tourists. At the *Fiesta of the Patios* in 2013 there were approximately 41,600 visitors. Therefore, we considered the target population to be 41,600. The sampling error of the investigation was +/-3.13%. and the reliability index, according to Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.782. The high index obtained reinforces the validity of the research work carried out (Nunnally and Bernstein: 1994).

As for the types of tourists surveyed, these were stratified by country and, for Spanish residents, by region, according to the percentages obtained in the Hotel

Table 1

Technical details of the investigation.

Number of people who visited the Patios (2013)	**41,600 people**
Sample	960 surveys
Sampling error	+/-3.13%
Procedure	Stratified random sampling
Performance period	May 2014
Sample Control	Implementation and monitoring of fieldwork by the authors of the research

Source: Authors.

Occupancy Survey for May 2012 (the latest data available on a monthly basis) (NSI: 2014) and with data from the Tourism Observatory of Cordoba for 2012 (City Council of Cordoba: 2013). Thus in May 2012, the total number of tourists who stayed in hotels in the city of Cordoba was 90,366, of whom 48,364 were Spanish (53.52%) and 42,002 were foreigners (46.48%).

Table 1 shows the technical details of the research conducted at the *Fiesta of the Patios* of 2014.

The data collected was organised, tabulated and analysed using the SPSS 15.0 programme. Data processing was performed through the use of univariate and bivariate statistical tools.

Results

Table 2 shows the tourist profile analysed by gender, age, income, education level, country of origin and professional category.

Table 2

Social and demographic profile of the tourist.

Variables		Percentage	Variables		Percentage
Gender	Man	46.5%	Educational	Primary education	4.8%
(N = 960)	Woman	53.3%	level	Secondary education	23.6%
			(N = 945)	University education	71.6%
Age	Under 30 years of age	16.7%	Country of origin	Spain	52.5%
(N = 959)	30-39 years old	19.0%	(N = 960)	France	9.7%
	40-49 years old	17.2%		Germany	6.1%
	50-59 years old	22.1%		United Kingdom	5.5%
	60 years old or more	25.0%		USA	4.4%
				The Netherlands	2.6%
				Japan	1.8%
				Belgium	1.4%
				Portugal	1.1%
				Other	14.9%
Income	Under € 700	48.1%	Occupational	Employee	32.6%
(N = 826)	From € 700 to € 1,000	21.9%	Category	Retired	17.0%
	From € 1,001 to € 1,500	21.1%	(N = 936)	Civil Servant	16.9%
	From € 1,501 to € 2,500	5.5%		Self-employed	15.9%
	Over € 2,500	3.4%		Student	9.4%
				Housewife	7.6%
				Other	0.6%

Source: Authors.

According to Table 2, the typical tourist visiting the *Fiesta of the Patios* is a professional person with a university education, probably over 50 years of age with an average income. Similarly, in terms of the distribution of foreign visitors, it should be noted that the diversity of nationalities suggests that information about this form of ICH is already widely distributed. In fact, the respondents came from 39 different countries. This allows us to conclude that, given the wide cultural and geographic spectrum of foreign visits, a significant increase in visits could be achieved with better promotion.

Table 3
How did you find out about the *Fiesta of the Patios*.

Source of Information	Percentage
Recommendation from friends and family	43.5%
Tourist brochures	17.3%
Information found in Internet	16.8%
Own experience of previous years	14.5%
Advertising in the media	12.3%
Recommendation by a travel agency with a physical presence	6.4%
Recommendation in social networks	4.5%
Recommendation by an online travel agency	4.2%

Source: Authors.

Table 4
Rating of different aspects of the *Fiesta of the Patios*.

Aspects	Rating
Conservation of the courtyard	4.33
Atmosphere in the courtyard itself	4.27
Integration between architecture and floral decoration	4.24
Accessibility to the courtyard	4.14
Comfort in the course of the visit	4.03
Distance between the different courtyards	3.94
Signage in the different courtyards	3.75
Information received on the different routes	3.74
Waiting time to visit the courtyards	3.51
Purchase of souvenirs	3.12

Source: Authors.

Furthermore, 73.5% of the respondents stayed overnight in Cordoba, mainly in 4 and 5 star hotels (32.8%) and, generally, they travelled accompanied by their partner (53.7%).

Another objective of this research was to understand how the visitors had learned of the *Fiesta of the Patios*. Table 3 shows the responses to this question.

According to Table 3, 43.5% of persons surveyed said they had learned of the *Fiesta of the Patios* thanks to the recommendations of friends and family, and 17.3% through tourist brochures delivered in the city of Cordoba itself. Furthermore, it is striking that only 4.5% of the surveyed tourists indicated that they had discovered it through comments on social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), although the percentage is higher if we focus on information provided on the Internet (16.8%).

It was interesting that 14.5% of the respondents in 2014 were making a repeat visit. They were mostly well-to-do, university-educated Spaniards; 62.1% of them spent the night in Cordoba and 44.1% did so in a hotel in the capital.

Another objective of this research was to know what tourists thought of the *Fiesta of the Patios* as well as about a number of related issues. Table 4 shows the main results to that question – 5 were 'very good', 1 'very bad'.

Table 5
Spearman's Correlation coefficient: level of satisfaction with different variables related to the *Fiesta of the Patios*.

Aspects	Rating
Comfort in the performance of the visit	0,490*
Atmosphere in the courtyard itself	0,460*
Conservation of the courtyard	0,459*
Accessibility to the courtyard	0,457*
Integration between architecture and floral decoration	0,428*
Distance between the different courtyards	0,407*
Signage of the different courtyards	0,393*
Waiting time to visit the different courtyards	0,321*
Purchase of souvenirs	0,271*

Note: * Significant correlation at 1%
Source: Authors.

The best aspects of the *Fiesta of the Patios* according to the visitors surveyed, were the conservation and the authentic atmosphere within the patios. The least successful were the opportunities to buy souvenirs, the waiting time to enter some of the patios, especially those on the most popular routes and on certain days of the week, and the information about routes and locations.

Overall the level of tourist satisfaction was high, with Spanish tourists rating it at 4.51 and foreigners rating it at 4.25 (making an average of 4.39) and with women recording a slightly higher level of satisfaction than men.

Thus, the three most determinant aspects of tourist satisfaction are comfort in carrying out the visit, the existing environment within the courtyard and the conservation of both the environment and floral ornaments.

Conclusions

Since the inscription of the *Fiesta of the Patios* by UNESCO, there has been a significant increase in the number of visitors coming to Cordoba in May. The *Fiesta* represents a Córdoban tradition that reflects the importance of socialisation and of cooperation among neighbours, values which should be preserved and transmitted to future generations.

Tourist organisations in Cordoba should note that almost half of the visitors to the *Fiesta of the Patios* (specifically 43.5%), learned of its existence through the recommendation of friends and family, so more work needs to be done to publicise the *Fiesta* in other ways than are currently employed.

The main limitation of this research is that it is based solely on data from visitors staying in hotels.

As a future line of research, we recommend a study of other tourists and the local community itself at the *Fiesta of the Patios*, so tourist organisations will have a better idea of their potential clients and their motivation for visiting. We also recommend that further in-depth research be done on the best ways to market the *Fiesta*.

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