

# THE DIFFUSION OF HERITAGE THROUGH THE INTERNET. THE CASE OF CASTILE AND LEON

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

For a region or a country is very important that his main municipalities are present on the Internet, and one of the most simple and effective ways to achieve this is through an institutional or official website, in which every municipality can include information about his major attractions, especially those related to tourism, one of the major industries in Spain. Therefore, and due to the development of Information and Knowledge Society, whose main tool is the Network, is essential for municipalities to be present in the Digital Sphere. Donaire and Galfí (2011) comment in this regard that «from the entry of Internet into the tourism market, digital media are becoming extremely important in the construction and dissemination of the tourist image of a place». Thus, this new medium allows municipal organisms to offer updated and detailed information of their cultural and tourism products, reaching a large audience at low cost.

In short, the Web is «a window to the world» (Baños and Ramírez, 2004), an excellent way of stimulating tourism as dictated by current trends: through the mass diffusion of culture and heritage.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Heritage as base of Cultural Tourism

The concept of heritage can be characterized by saying that «the whole heritage of a territory is composed of natural objects and cultural (tangible) and behaviours, knowledge and values of the people who live there (intangible heritage)» (Olivera, 2011).

Heritage is today one of the main factors of tourism. Therefore, «the heritage assets are in demand with increasing intensity by growing number of tourists» (Velasco, 2009). On the other hand, and talking about economy, «the cultural heritage as a revalued tourism resource stimulates various economic sectors, encourage investment and increase the earning potential of the local population» (Fernández and Ramos, 2010).

As we have seen, the enhancement of heritage, as the fundamental basis of cultural tourism, it is extremely important to the economic and social development of a region.

## **2.2. The relationship between identity and heritage from the Social Identity Theory (SIT)**

The Social Identity Theory (hereafter: SIT) has been developed in the seventies and eighties by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), its main exponents. The SIT is based on the hypothesis that «however rich and complex the idea that individuals have of themselves in relation to the physical or social world around them, some aspects of this idea are provided by the belonging to certain groups or social categories» (Tajfel, 1984).

Kravets and de Camargo (2008) claim, as to the relationship that seems established between heritage and identity, that «the heritage is one of the main tourist resources, which has become one of the symbolic references of the identity values of great part of human communities (...) Due to their symbolic capacity, it turns into a powerful instrument to legitimize the identities (local, regional, etc.)».

We think that Castile and Leon, through its citizens, shapes a social category with its own characteristics in terms of culture and heritage, that make it different from other groups (Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia, Extremadura, Andalusia or the Canary Islands, for example). In the same way, we believe that the citizens of Castile and Leon, born in the reality of their region and not in others belong to the pre-structured Spanish society, adopt certain values and common elements, obtaining a group identity. We have also underlined that social identity has two dimensions: the physical and the psychological ones, fact that, in our opinion, is very important because the physical dimension of Castile and Leon's social identity can be linked to tangible cultural heritage of the region; in the same way that the psychological level can be related to the intangible cultural heritage.

## **2.3. Framing Theory**

Framing Theory is one of the major theoretical trends in communication research. Bryant and Miron (2004) argue that this one is the theory on mass communication more used in the 21st century by researchers who publish their articles in leading international journals.

One of the most important authors who have thought about the Framing Theory is Robert Entman (1993). He affirms that the framing essentially involves selection and salience. Regarding the first term, he says the process of framing means selecting some aspects of perceived reality and makes them more salient in the communication text. The salience, in turn, means making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences.

In essence, Framing Theory is a conceptual and methodological system widely used for the study of journalistic texts, and as we believe it can also be very suitable for web analytics, we have taken this theory by providing a new perspective and, through it, iden-

tify what elements of identity and culture of Castile and Leon are emphasized at the sites of its main towns.

### 3. METHOD

The aim of this study consists of determining which features of the cultural identity of Castile and Leon are promoted further through the Internet, and for that we have analyzed the websites of the most important municipalities in the region.

The selection criterion has been clear and simple: we take the 15 most populated and, therefore, the most representative of each one of the 9 provinces, guaranteeing this way the equity between them. Subsequently, we used the search engine *Google* to identify the links of each municipality and develop the final list of official sites.

In total, the research tried to have a sample of 135 websites, but in the period was implemented the content analysis, which ran from February 25 until March 16, 2010, 4 municipalities lacked this element. For it, the final sample with consists of 131 units of analysis.

#### 3.1. Codebook

The method we used to conduct the research is content analysis. Wimmer and Dominick (1996) say there are many definitions of content analysis, which highlights the following: «is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative way, in order to measure certain variables». This method involves certain steps. The development of the codebook, which specifies in great detail how to assess each variable, is one of the most relevant.

We now present each of the sections in which the codebook is structured, while briefly detailing the categories of analysis contained in these sections:

SECTIONS	CATEGORIES	POSSIBLE ANSWERS
UNIT OF ANALYSIS IDENTIFICATION	Encoder name, number of unit of analysis, date coding, municipality name, province and population.	1 = information does exist 0 = no information
GENERAL INFORMATION	Location, size, climate, history, economic activity, political issues, etc.	1 = information does exist 0 = no information
HERITAGE INFORMATION ( <i>tangible, intangible and natural</i> )	Existence of museums, rooms of exhibitions, archaeological remains, theatres, bullrings, cinemas, cathedrals, churches, monasteries, monuments, cultural agenda, gastronomic offer, ecclesiastic events, bullfighting, idiomatic tourism, parks, natural places, etc.	1 = information does exist 0 = no information
IDENTITY ELEMENTS ( <i>physical and psychological</i> )	Approach of the elements relative to the history and the art, personalities and events, traditions and customs, cultural and gastronomic activity, etc.	1 = information does exist 0 = no information

### 3.2. Reliability of the coding process

We calculate different indexes to verify the degree of agreement between the two analysts who worked in the codification. The first one of them is the *percentage of observed agreement*, that serves to evaluate the simple agreement between the codifiers. It had an average value for the total of 42 variables of the study of «0.90» (this is, 90%), a figure that is very positive because «0» implies the absence of agreement, and «1» perfect agreement. In this sense, the variable «approach to cultural and gastronomic activity» has been that minor percentage of agreement has presented (58.33%).

As for *Scott's pi index*, which also serves to evaluate the agreement, but controlling the random, amounted to «0.71» of average, value that indicates a good reliability bearing in mind that «-1» supposes a perfect disagreement, «0» it represents agreement for random, and «1» the perfect agreement (Igartua, 2006). At this level, the variable «approach of the cultural and gastronomic activity» has also been the lowest rate Pi (0.23).

## 4. RESULTS

What aspects of identity and heritage of Castile and Leon are promoted on the websites of his main municipalities in terms of tourism?

If we remember, in terms of identity we had made a distinction between physical and psychological identity. Of two typologies established, information regarding the psychological identity ( $M$  [Psycho.Ident.] = 0.63;  $SD$  = 0.40) shows a value slightly higher than the information provided on the physical identity ( $M$  [Physic.Ident.] = 0.55;  $SD$  = 0.38). Nevertheless, after performing the *Student's t test* for related samples, we noticed that there are no statistically significant differences between the two identities and, therefore, they go hand in hand on the websites of the municipalities of Castile y Leon.

Moreover, the manifestation of psychological identity that most reporting relates to cultural and gastronomic activities (73.1% of the sites reported in this respect), whereas the manifestation of physical identity which is most talked about is directly related to the history and the art shown in museums and exhibition halls of the municipalities (66.7 % of the sites treats this question).

For heritage is concerned, we have distinguished between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Thus, information on intangible heritage ( $M$  [Intang.Herit] = 0.42,  $SD$  = 0.20) is higher compared with information on tangible ( $M$  [Tang.Herit] = 0.39,  $SD$  = 0.21). The data that has thrown the *Student's t test* for related samples:  $t(107) = -1.87$ ,  $p < 0.063$ , allow us to confirm, albeit in a slightly trend way, that intangible cultural heritage monopolizes a greater role than tangible on the websites of the sample.

On the other hand, the tangible manifestation that most reporting is related to the existence of churches and chapels in the towns (in 86.1% of sites reported in this respect), while that the main expression of intangible heritage is one that appears linked to the existence of ecclesiastical events of special importance (in 75% of sites reporting on this subject). Both figures claim a marked religious character.

We should also target a number of interesting correlation results that have occurred between some information, connected with the notions explained above. First, there has

been a strong positive correlation between Material Heritage Information and Physical Identity Information [ $r(108) = 0.48, p < 0.01$ ], which makes us understand that the more is a report on websites, most also report on the other. Second, there has been a strong positive correlation between the Information on Intangible Heritage and Psychological Identity Information [ $r(108) = 0.37, p < 0.01$ ], which again makes us understand that provide more data of one on the websites, more data will appear of the other.

To summarize, and alluding to fundamental concepts of Social Identity Theory (SIT), social group formed by the people of Castile and Leon is characterized, in terms of identity and culture through the Internet, by an attempt to enhance their intangible cultural heritage and identity, factors that differentiate it from other groups. Therefore, Castile y Leon fits in tourist terms to what Galí, Majó and Vidal (2000) proposed: «the definition of tourism today needs the affirmation of the culture and enhancement of the heritage as a common denominator».

## 5. LIMITATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Problems in the analysis have been several. One of the most significant is the transience of web content. Our analysis is restricted to a specific time period, in which the reality of the sites of Castile y Leon was the one who tried to reflect our data. Probably some sample sites have changed subtly, been restructured or even disappeared. However, it is important to clarify that reflect of cultural identity would not change substantially if we make a new analysis in a different period, because identity is a well-established factor in any region.

Another problem was to address the content of web sites as a whole, as to encode the variables was necessary a complete inspection of the sites, something very laborious and, even, it could affect the reliability of certain variables. In any case, McMillan (2000) argues that «content analysis may be applicable to the moving target that represents the Web». Therefore, we have seen fit, according to the aim, choose content analysis as a method to undertake the study.

As regards contributions, we have based our approach to the content of websites based on Framing Theory, very applied to journalistic texts. Therefore, the most innovation of our study was to use this theory, very common in communication in recent decades, to the content analysis of websites. Moreover, we have also tried to make an empirical and statistical contribution to the great scientific and institutional production that concerns the relationship between heritage and identity.

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