

TOURIST DIMENSION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE CITY OF LORCA (REGION OF MURCIA, SPAIN)

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One of the main sources of income in Spain is tourism, and this economic activity is continuously having different effects on the territory. These changes are taking place on morphological, economic, social, and landscape levels, and all of them are evident in the city of Lorca (Region of Murcia). This place, whose monumental heritage has clearly cultural marks, finds it seriously difficult to establish itself as a tourist destination. The bad state of conservation of some historic buildings was aggravated after the earthquake on 11th May, 2011. As such, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports saw the need to draw up “The Management Plan of Cultural Heritage” (2011). This document showed the functional limitations of historic monuments in Lorca and, as a result, the Ministry pushed for a new study focused on “The relationship between Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Development in Lorca. Action Strategies” (*Interrelación del Patrimonio Cultural, Turismo y Desarrollo de Lorca. Estrategias de actuación*). This research was done following an integrative methodology that was designed to promote the recuperation of the Heritage, its incorporation into touristic activity and into the process of urban recovery. Some of the main results of this study are summarized in this article, which could help to understand the current situation of cultural elements in Lorca.

Taking the above as a starting point, this review is structured in five parts. The first one explain the current situation related to the destinations whose main sights are historic elements, whether cities, archaeological sites, buildings or landscapes. As all of them are identified with individual states, each of them must be analysed in detail to know what actions to take, always respecting criteria of sustainability that must be included in the process of planning and management.

In recent years there have been numerous initiatives, Tourism Development Plan for the Region of Murcia (1996), Strategic Plan for the Development of Cultural Tourism in Lorca (1998), Special Protection Plan Lorca’s Wall (2006), Special Protection and Rehabilitation Plan (PEPRI) (2000), Lorca *Lorca Taller del Tiempo* (2002/3), *Barrios Altos* Rehabilitation Plan (2004), Plan to Promote Tourism of Lorca (2004), Strategic Development Plan Region of Murcia 2000-2006, inauguration of National Parador of tourism (2012), and the specific measures implemented after the earthquake of 2011, such

as the Master Plan for Recovery of Cultural Heritage (2011), etc. It is apparent, therefore, the need for coordination and cooperation between the areas of urbanism, heritage and tourism.

Considering the current complex context the Lorca tourism model needs to be reconsidered within segments of urban and cultural tourism. The arrival of tourists is an opportunity for the development and physical recovery of certain elements and heritage sites. However, this requires infrastructure and an appropriate team of professionals to prevent tourism or the recovery of monuments from becoming vectors of social tensions. In an effort to avoid such a situation, the study "The relationship between Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Development in Lorca. Action Strategies" was drawn up with the aim of, first, meeting the demands of the tourism sector and, secondly, to support the active recovery of cultural heritage and to facilitate its integration into the context of strategies for economic and urban renewal. Its origin lies in the willingness of the Emergency Unit and Risk Management (Muñoz, 2012) to make the most of the investments of the Plan for the Recovery of Cultural Heritage of Lorca (Barceló et Al. 2012).

In view of above assumptions, the objectives and structure of the study were defined, which comprise the second chapter of this article. It opted for an interpretation oriented towards interconnection between conservation, recovery and use of heritage tourism in its many dimensions, but always according to criteria of responsibility and sustainability. In this way, the main objectives defined were:

1. To analyse the true and cultural-touristic functionality of Lorca's heritage. It's important to study intangible and material heritage, taking into account the architectural richness, the diversity of landscapes, the values and traditions of Lorca.
2. This study aims to be useful for the Management Plan, especially for recovering the Cultural Heritage of the city.
3. To give an integrated and qualitative vision of the current touristic situation.
4. To identify the components related to the cultural and touristic use of the heritage. It's important to analyse both the supply and the demand aspects.
5. To demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of the cultural-touristic use of Lorca's heritage.
6. To design a strategy that links the touristic situation with the cultural components, the landscape's values, the urban aspects and management organisms.

To address these issues an applied and integrative methodology was used, whose process of development was divided into three phases: The first focused on compiling the basic information and most important variables related to tourism and heritage and then designing a table with the indicators associated with the tourist functionality of heritage considering the territorial and urban context. Upon compiling data, the 2nd phase began in which the variables previously obtained were analysed and interpreted. The results collected the most relevant aspects of the true situation of the sights of Lorca, which allowed us to do a diagnosis using a SWOT matrix. In the last stage, we used the results to define a strategy of action based on four priority areas: urbanistic-territorial-landscape, heritage, tourism, and management.

This method of analysis enabled us to clearly see which were the priority actions to improve and to implement in the cultural and touristic planning and management of Lorca. These terms are dealt with in the third and fourth part of this article. This city has a significant number of monuments but the most significant from a tourism point of view is the Castle, also called *Fortaleza del Sol* (Fortress of the Sun). In spite of the tourist potential, the truth shows a limited level of functionality. In fact, of the seventy-four elements studied, only twenty four, that is to say 32% of Lorca's heritage, could be visited. But this situation wasn't exclusive to monuments, only a few urban spaces of Historic centre were well prepared for tourism activity, these were Plaza de Colon Square, Calle Alberca-Santo Domingo and Plaza de España. The most important problem detected related to urban spaces was the lack of connection between the area where the Castle is and the Historic Centre, because in the middle of the two, is the area called Barrios Altos, a neighbourhood that shows notable social, economic, and functional problems.

Moreover, the significance that the landscape has acquired in recent years in the area of tourism should be pointed out. In fact, nowadays, it is acting as a key factor in differentiating one tourist destination from another. Lorca has a big potential in these terms. However, having amazing landscapes doesn't mean that these are already touristic sights. For this reason, it is essential that they are previously adapted to the needs of this new use. Currently, Lorca only has one unit of landscape with tourist functionality, which is the area around the Castle. Furthermore, it is the only one with interest for the visitor, because the others units, Cejo de los Enamorados, Puente Nuevo, and Virgen de la Huerta, are totally unknown for people who are new to the city.

Another component of the tourist destination is related to intangible heritage. The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, (UNESCO, 2003), defined intangible heritage as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity" (Art.2). In this respect, in Lorca we could identify seven elements with cultural value and tourist attraction: *Semana Santa, la Feria de Septiembre; las Fiestas de San Clemente, el Mercado Semanal, las Cuadrillas de Pascua and the embroideries in silk and gold*. However, the results of the analysis show that only the Easter processions, declared of International Tourist Interest, have a true interest for visitors.

Once the qualitative and quantitative analysis that would help to do the diagnosis was finished, the study explains the need to define a strategy useful for the future territorial urban, cultural, and touristic development of Lorca. These action lines are set forth in the fifth chapter, with the following being the priority interests:

- Encourage the territorial and functional connection of heritage resources.
- Improve the quality tourist of the sights and historic environment.
- To opt for a quality brand and introduce "Lorca destination" into new markets.

- Promote a program that looks to enhance the status of heritage conservation and increase their tourist interest.
- Connect the areas with heritage and tourism in the city and merge them with the sights of the second heritage level.
- Redefine the model and Lorca tourism product offering.
- Define programs that show the need to professionalize the sectors related to the planning and management of heritage and tourism.

Undoubtedly, one of the main conclusions that we reached at the end of the study is to promote the project “Lorca, Tourism and Heritage: a future commitment”. This one needs a municipal institutional leader, and requires of business involvement and the implication of the population. Finally, neither of these aspects will be possible without the existence of innovative, powerful and professional management units.