CULTURAL TOURISM, INTANGIBLE PATRIMONY AND ELEMENTS THAT AFFECT THE DIFFERENT SATISFACTION OF THE TOURIST FROM THE STUDY OF THE PANAMA HAT

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CASE STUDY

The increase in tourism and its importance within the heritage and cultural destinations is an element with a strong influence on the improvement of the living conditions of many territories, especially in developing areas where an incentive to the distribution of wealth and growth of the local production is supposed (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). However, along with the increase in the attraction and reception of tourists it is also necessary to improve their degree of satisfaction with the visit, because this element has a crucial influence on their intention to return and recommending the destination to other visitors. Most studies, nowadays, propose that customer satisfaction and attachment to a specific destination are derived from the experience and may be affected by their personal point of view, their sentimentality and their own expectations (Yuksel, Yuksel & Bilim, 2010). In fact, the experience of tourists has become a key concept in cultural and heritage tourism, where satisfaction is often determined by the overall experience obtained, which includes entertainment, culture, education and social interactions (De Rojas & Camarero, 2008). Therefore, from certain perspectives (Schofield & Thompson, 2007) it is necessary to determine the factors that affect motivation and experiences of the tourist.

While the most common factors to perform these analyses are the income, education level and gender, the studies that have used factors such as area of origin are scarcer (McCleary, Weaver & Hsu, 2006), although they constitute a fairly valid analysis and relatively simple to be performed (Kee, Wan & Ho, 2007). Similarly, in the studies that have theorized whether or not there is influence of cultural valued on tourist behavior, the hypotheses have been validated too. In addition, it has been possible to argue that cultural variables group different areas, such as overall, national, regional or local culture (Weiermair, 2000). This type of cultural distance is important, because tourists who travel more than once to the same place should be less sensitive to these "cultural differences" (Oom *et al*., 2011) and in turn, compel the destination sector to develop a new way of facing their visits and overcoming their differences. The latter element would determine both perception and quality of service and its evaluation or satisfaction with the service (Kerstetter, Confer & Graefe, 2001; Turner, Reisinger & McQuilken, 2002).

In one case or another, today it seems evident that a growing "segmentation" of the tourist categories is taking place, which would lead to establish different valuations of destinations (Huh, Uysal & McCleary, 2006). This contributes to obtain a better vision of these factors that allows understanding phenomena such as the repetition of the visit. There is a range of cultural factors, social class, socialization and personality that affect the level of knowledge, disposition and interest of the tourist. Thus, there is a need to investigate the existing relations between cultural motivations and the behavior and assessment of this type of tourists, recognizing several studies in which many tourists are more highly motivated by cultural destinations than others (Cordente *et al*. 2011; McKercher & du Cros, 2003). Therefore, the success of a tourist destination is found on the satisfaction of the tourist, which not only should be mentioned by the choice of the tourist but for the decision to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). For this reason, the issues related to social, economic and demographic characteristics of the visitors can play a significant role.

With this background, the present study presents the application of these issues around the tourists that arrive to the city of Cuenca (Ecuador) in the context of intangible cultural heritage. Cuenca is the third most important city of Ecuador, with about half a million inhabitants. It is located in the Andes, at 2,550 meters above sea level in the south of the country. This place has become a cultural and political referent of the country, since the pre-Hispanic times, with the settlement of the Cañarí people who came after the Inca expansion and the subsequent Spanish conquest (Vanegas, 2008). Its cultural diversity has been an element of undeniable value and one of the attractions of the city, which has fostered a broad development of both arts and sciences that is evidenced in its archeological ruins, its museums of religious art and its churches of the Colonial and Republican periods. Both facades and interiors of the churches correspond to clear representations of Baroque art. Together with this, the Panama hat was adopted by the productive tradition of the natives of the provinces of Azuay and Cañar from 1835, although its elaboration in Ecuador dates back to centuries (Mintur, 2014). While in the nearby town of Sigsig (40 kilometers from Cuenca) the tradition of weaving the toquilla straw hat is preserved. In the city of Cuenca the companies that perform the finishes to hats, export the hats and museums and stores focused on this product are

concentrated. There is also a museum of the Cuenca municipality and some spaces dedicated to the study of this heritage and other knowledge, such as the Inter-American Center of Popular Arts.

Thus, in 1999 the city was declared Cultural Heritage of Humanity by Unesco, being an exceptional example of Spanish colonial city, planned and located in inland areas. This made Cuenca the second city Cultural Heritage of Humanity in Ecuador, after Quito (Unesco, 2015). In the case of Panama hat, this product received the declaration of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by Unesco in 2012.

2. METHOD AND RESULTS

At methodological level, an empirical work has been performed with structured personal surveys aimed at tourists who were visiting Cuenca in different tourist attractions related to the Panama hat (museums, stores, factories, etc.). The printed questionnaire has been the tool used to collect information through questions in a 5-point Likert scale. The target population for this work has been identified as Ecuadorian or foreign tourists who were in the city of Cuenca, visiting paces linked to the Panama hat during October and November of 2015. Non-probabilistic and convenience sampling were used as sampling technique. Respondents were selected trying to cover different sociodemographic layers and a profile as wide as possible, despite the fact that performing the surveys mainly between weeks, assuming a bias in favor of the foreign tourists.

In order to analyze the results, it was decided to use the Kruskal-Wallis test, a nonparametric method to test whether a dataset comes from the same population or if it reflects significant differences in function of a specific parameter. This method that is used when the distribution of the sample is not homogeneous (as happened in the study) is identical to the ANOVA and it constitutes an extension of the Mann-Whitney U test for three or more groups. In this sense, Mann-Whitney U test was applied for the variables that only allow generating two responses (gender and previous knowledge or not about the Panama hat as intangible cultural heritage and as element linked to the city of Cuenca) and the Kruskal-Wallis for the rest. Therefore, this statistical analysis is intended to the factors or reasons that can be established by the different valuations of the analyzed items, linked to satisfaction with the destination and related to the *sociodemographic traits* of the tourist, with the *traits linked to the previous knowledge* of the destination and with their *socio-labor characteristics*.

Results evidence that the so-called *traits linked to the previous knowledge* would be related to a greater number of differences in the valuation of the analyzed items, specially in the case of the existence of knowledge about the Panama hat as a product related to the Cuenca identity. This would explain different valuations in nine aspects, four of which are directly related to the Panama hat: museums, factories, valuation of the Sigsig canton and the Panama hat, along with other issues such as the Cuenca cleaning, taxi service, cultural activities and shows, merchantable artisan works or the Internet connection. On the other hand, the existence of previous visits would be related to six different valuations, in general connected with practical issues such as the price of the trip, cultural activities and shows or the merchantable artisan products next to the Sigsig canton. Finally, the previous knowledge

of Cuenca as a city Cultural Heritage of Humanity would be linked to the existence of differences in three elements related to the Panama hat, such as museums, factories and the Sigsig canton, along with two others: the trip to Cuenca, which coincides with the existence of a previous knowledge of the city as a patrimonial destination, and the taxi service.

Following this at certain distance, the weight of the *sociodemographic traits,* especially the origin would be emphasized as explanatory factors of the different valuations. In this case, eight differences would be noted in relation to valuation: price of the trip, satisfaction with the conservation of the environment, signage of the tourist elements, cleaning, cultural activities, taxi service and the commercial area. These are very subjective aspects insofar, whereas the origin can give rise to differences in regard to a service or product as expensive, to the existing cleaning standards, or to considerations about the good or bad conservation of the environment. For example, for a person who comes from another Ecuadorian city, the usual perception of Cuenca is that it is a fairly clean city, safe and orderly, whereas this consideration may be very different for tourists who come from other countries or contexts. Finally, it can be considered that other sociodemographic traits such as age or gender (each explaining three different valuations) and the *sociolaboral* traits can hardly be considered in the interpretation of the different valuations.

In a second phase of the analysis, four factors that seemed to generate a greater number of differences in the valuation of the analyzed items were isolated in order to compare the average scores of each subgroup in function of the origin, number of visits to the city, previous knowledge about the Panama hat as Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and previous knowledge of the Panama hat as a product linked to Cuenca. The most relevant results in terms of *origin* indicated a difference of 0.23 points between the best valuation (that of the Ecuadorian tourist) and the worst valuation (that of the European tourist), confirming n issue mentioned in the literature review: the greater cultural distance generates a worse valuation of the destination (Lee *et al.*, 2004).

In relation to the *number of previous visits* the amount of times in which people had travelled to Cuenca also seemed to influence the valuation of some elements linked to the tourist experience. In this sense, the qualification of signaling, taxi service, activity around the Panama hat in the Sigsig canton and especially trade in artisan products, the number of visits would positively influence their qualification, being elements that would tend to be valuated differently in the return to Cuenca. On the contrary, the price of the trip to Cuenca would be evaluated more negatively in the repetition of the visit. In general, the average of these values would tend to increase according to the number of visits, with a global difference of 0.14 points.

Finally, the *previous knowledge* about the product would also have a differentiation in its valuation. Thus, all values in which the differences are significant, the presence of a previous knowledge either of the Panama hat as Intangible Heritage of Humanity or as element linked to the city of Cuenca and its environment presented a higher valuation than when there was no such knowledge. This emphasizes the importance of reaching the visitor in its place of origin. Thus, it can be ensured that the existence of previous knowledge about the space to be visited can positively influence the valuation of some of its elements, such as the case of museums, factories and productive spaces linked to it, of the knowledge and satisfaction in relation to this product or issues related to handicrafts and cultural activities, as well as its relation to other more general services.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In the analyzed case, socioeconomic, sociodemographic and previous knowledge factors in relation to the satisfaction of the tourist have been identified. Results have indicated an important weight of the latter, especially of the number of previous visits and especially of the knowledge about the tourist product. Along with them, the origin seems to complement the different valuation of most of the analyzed elements, being capable to explain most of them. These results are in accordance with previous works that indicated the importance of previous visits when assessing a tourist destination, though they add new issues such as the importance of targeting the publicity of a destination and its attractions towards the knowledge of the product, because this is also an important factor in satisfaction.

Therefore, in the case of Cuenca, in the tourism linked to the Panama hat it should be emphasized the importance of motivation or previous knowledge about this product, together with the number of times the visit has been repeated and the origin to explain the differences in terms of qualification of some components of the tourist experience. Thus, a previous knowledge, a greater cultural proximity to the visited space and the existence of previous visits seem to explain a better valuation of several components both specific to the Panama hat and general.

The importance of this study is that it is capable to identify which with some of the traits linked to the greater and lesser differences at the time of valuating a destination related to the intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, its main limitation is that it would require a continuation in search of what factors would explain the differences in these items, for which this has not been yet found. Tourists have proved to be complex subjects, in which different factors interact in parallel, even overlapping, which makes difficult in a certain extent to obtain that homogeneous or "frozen" image of them. Therefore, further work on this topic and its comparison with other similar study cases may be of great interest to explain these issues.