Perspectives on Local Heritage:
Insights From an Italian Lens

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates how it is possible to remain at the forefront of technological progress without losing sight of traditions. Innovation and novelties are the key words of this project; the authors conducted an analysis on how to take advantage of novelties without destroying traditional values and local communities, followed by a thorough collection of cases where innovation has been the key to preserve local Italian heritage. The focus is on cases where innovation has been the key to revitalise traditional festival or crafts that have been attracting thousands of tourists while trying to maintain their local authenticity by keeping these traditions the same for years with the right use of innovation to highlight our origins and those of our ancestors. A main example is provided by the authors' own country: Italy, which is appealing to loads of tourists thanks to her natural heritage beauty and to the innovations that came with it in the years.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage, involving both tangible and intangible assets, is a major tourism source, especially in European cities, and can play an important role in increasing the value of urban destinations in terms of cultural diversity, territorial identity and long-term sustainability.

Experiencing globalization in tourism as well, we can state that success is based on innovation. Regarding heritage tourism, product, service, organization and process innovations are equally required as new ways of being competitive. Talking about Europe, Italian local heritage provides one of the most ancient and famous tourist attractions all over the world, which is deeply rooted in traditions.

Italy is known for its regional diversity, with each region boasting its own distinct culture, dialects, traditions, and customs.

Home to many historical landmarks, including ancient ruins, medieval castles, Renaissance palaces, and Baroque churches. These landmarks serve as tangible reminders of Italy's rich past and are often key attractions for tourists Italy has been a cradle of artistic innovation for centuries, producing renowned painters, sculptors, architects, and artisans. From the masterpieces of the Renaissance Italians celebrate a myriad of festivals and religious celebrations that are deeply ingrained in local tradition.

Overall, Italian local heritage is a multifaceted tapestry of culture, history, and tradition that reflects the country's rich and diverse heritage. Preserving and celebrating this heritage is essential for maintaining Italy's unique identity and ensuring that future generations can continue to appreciate its beauty and significance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Firstly, the authors are going explore how digital innovations in preserving cultural heritage have acquired a particular boost because the fast development of technology nowadays and for a recent disaster that has impacted our lives: this and other external factors (such as the increase in travel costs and the growing demand for personalized tourism) have favored the development of new forms of tourism that exploit <u>digital technologies</u>. Some examples that are going to be provided are the <u>AR (augmented reality)</u> allows you to add digital information's via PC, tablet and smartphone to physical reality; the <u>XR (extended reality)</u> is a mixed reality that adds 3D holograms to physical reality; finally, the <u>VR (virtual reality)</u> allows you to be completely immersed in the world through the "oculus" and lose contact with physical reality: current visors are still bulky and uncomfortable but could soon become simple contact lenses. Virtual reality applied to the tourism sector offers significant advantages for both travelers and tour operators.

For travelers, VR allows you to live authentic and engaging experiences, immersing yourself in different places and cultures. It can also provide a detailed overview of a tourist attraction or hotel before booking a trip, helping you make informed decisions.

For tourism operators, it offers an opportunity to promote destinations in an innovative way and reach a wider audience. Airlines, hotels and travel agents can use VR to showcase their offerings in an engaging way, giving potential customers a taste of their travel experience. Virtual reality can in fact be applied to the sector of tourism in multiple ways, in particular some scholars have indicated six areas that could benefit most: planning and management, marketing, entertainment, education and learning, accessibility and heritage preservation, to which certain benefits are added personally for visitors.

In the field of marketing, for example, virtual reality could revolutionize the traditional methods of promoting and selling tourism by virtue of its ability to provide "sensory" information on the tourist experience offered. The very nature of the tourist product, that is, intangible, the quality of which can only be verified by the tourist afterwards the purchase and during the use, poses the need to "reassure" the tourist with respect to the positive outcome of the trip. Therefore, virtual tours are much more effective than brochures and tourist brochures traditional to encourage and stimulate the interest of visitors by giving them the opportunity to virtually "immerse" themselves in the hypothetical destination of the holiday: it is not a coincidence that many destinations have already equipped themselves with virtual tours order to promote nature parks, museums, art galleries and some examples in Italy are the Vatican

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