

## **The World Heritage List: A Big Data Spatial Econometrics Approach to Sites Promoting the Brand**

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**Abstract :** UNESCO's World Heritage program requests the inscribed locations to promote the World Heritage brand by clearly presenting information about it on-site. Based on feedback from over 319,000 visitors at 791 locations, we create an index that shows how much the World Heritage sites actually brand themselves as such. We find great heterogeneity throughout the list and explain this econometrically mostly with the economic benefit for the sites but also with cultural brand preferences, which are highest in Asia, followed by Europe and North America. We also find a positive relationship between World Heritage branding and conservation status and a U-shaped relationship between visitor numbers and WH branding. Based on our findings, we recommend to make clear World Heritage branding mandatory for all sites.

**Keywords :** UNESCO World Heritage, collective brand, cultural tourism, heritage conservation, brand equity, spatial econometrics

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