

How Cultural Tourists Perceive Authenticity in World Heritage Historic Centers: An Empirical Research

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Abstract : There is a clear 'cult of authenticity', at least in modern Western society. So, there is a need to analyze the tourist perception of authenticity, bearing in mind the destination, its attractions, motivations, cultural distance, and contact with other tourists. Our study seeks to investigate the relationship among cultural values, image, sense of place, perception of authenticity and behavior intentions at World Heritage Historic Centers. From a theoretical perspective, few researches focus on the impact of cultural values, image and sense of place on authenticity and intentions behavior in tourists. The intention of this study is to help close this gap. A survey was applied to collect data from tourists visiting two World Heritage Historic Centers - Guimarães in Portugal and Cordoba in Spain. Data was analyzed in order to establish a structural equation model (SEM). Discussion centers on the implications of model to theory and managerial development of tourism strategies. Recommendations for destinations managers and promoters and tourist organizations administrators are addressed.

Keywords : authenticity perception, behavior intentions, cultural tourism, cultural values, world heritage historic centers

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