



**ISTITUTO DI ECONOMIA E FINANZA**

# **PUBLIC FINANCE RESEARCH PAPERS**

**CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND DIGITAL INNOVATION: IS CULTURAL  
TOURISM BECOMING OBSOLETE?**

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Si prega di citare così: Valeria Cocco, Andrea Salustri (2021), "Cultural Institutions And Digital Innovation: Is Cultural Tourism Becoming Obsolete?", Public Finance Research Papers, Istituto di Economia e Finanza, DSGE, Sapienza University of Rome, n. 47 (<http://www.dsge.uniroma1.it/ricerca>).

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## **Cultural institutions and Digital Innovation: Is Cultural Tourism Becoming Obsolete?**

Abstract. This research investigates issues such as the preservation and valorization of cultural heritage, cultural and experiential tourism, cyber tourism and digital marketing. In this perspective, cultural tourism, being at the crossroads between the cultural and the economic system, may be thought as a primary activity in the effort of making economic development more culturally sustainable. However, the polarizing attractiveness of the Italian main cities of art results in a reduced capacity for spreading tourist flows throughout the national territory. Therefore, the aim of the research is to investigate how marketable and non-marketable cultural goods and services may be distributed to the wider public by means of digital technologies, either contributing to the human and social progress, either generating culturally sustainable economic value. Within this general framework, this research focuses on museums' management and on the challenge of triggering a process of digital social innovation as a foundation for the online fruition of cultural goods and services. While waiting for a "new tourist normality" and given the renewed need for social distancing to limit the contagion, by exploiting technological and digital innovation, a new inclusive and attractive market for cultural tourism has been shaped. Therefore, the travel experience, as well as all the activities related to the preservation and valorization of cultural heritage, could evolve, because of the renewed needs of tourists inspired by the experiences and emotions lived on digital platforms.

Keywords: cultural economics; museums services; cyber tourism

Subject classification codes: Z11, Z31, Z32

## **1. Introduction**

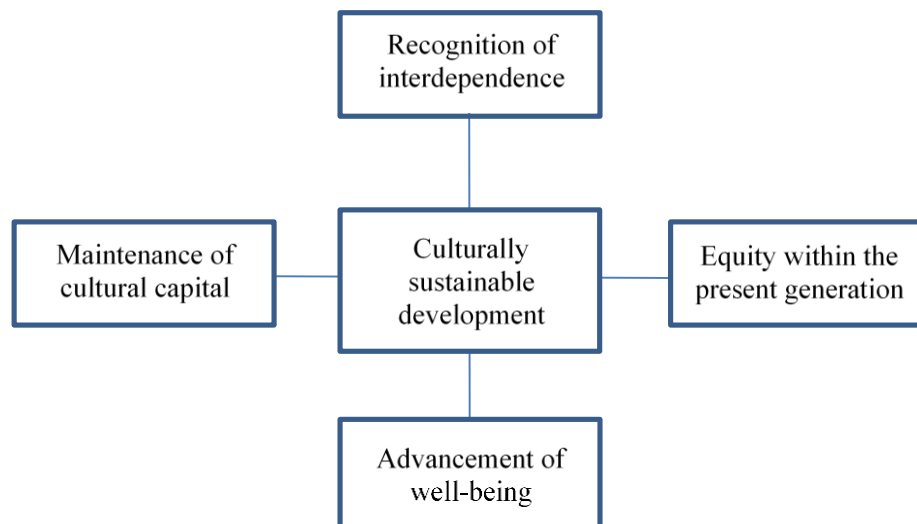
For many decades, art and culture have received scarce attention within economic research, and the few economic analyses on these topics were motivated by personal rather than by economic interests (Ginsburg, 2012). Indeed, according to economists as Adam Smith and David Ricardo, spending in the arts was intended as spending in leisure activities, as culture was included in the sphere of non-productive work. Still in the late 19th century Marshall considered inconceivable to attribute an economic value to objects such as paintings, unique monuments, etc. (Whitaker, 2010), but it is worth noting how that does not mean that classical economists did not recognize any value to culture (Cocco, Brogna, 2020). Rather, it means that they considered the cultural and the economic sphere as separate subjects, whereas the former was endowed of an intrinsic value (i.e., a mix of human and social value), while the latter was endowed of an economic value (i.e., a mix of use and exchange value). Although it was not yet possible in XX century to identify relevant economic analyses of the cultural sector, concepts and reflections gradually emerged and formed the basis of cultural economics. The founding fathers of cultural economics were authors such as Baumol and Bowen, Becker and Peacock, who defined the economy of art as “a sort of experimentation ground on the adequacy of fundamental economic concepts” (Blaug, 2001). Indeed, according to Gassler and Grace (1980) arts could be interpreted as an opportunity to create and circulate information, and consequently may achieve increasing economic importance in time (Kesting, 2005). Finally, Throsby (1995) illustrated the interactions between the cultural and the economic system that lay at the basis of cultural economics. Specifically, Throsby introduced the concept of “culturally sustainable development”, as a process that “encompasses both the idea of cultural development in its own right, according art and culture an independent and valued role in their own terms within society, and culture as a set

of attitudes and practices that can be instrumental in supporting, constraining, and/or contributing to economic and social development in the widest sense” (ibidem, p.202).

Then, he defined culturally sustainable development in terms of four principles or criteria: i) advancement of material and non-material well-being; ii) intergenerational equity and the maintenance of cultural capital; iii) equity within the present generation; iv) recognition of interdependence (ibidem, pp. 205).

Figure 1. Culturally sustainable development in a nutshell

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Source: our elaboration on Throsby (1995).

Within the general framework traced by Throsby, this research contributes to identifying and integrating issues such as the preservation and valorization of cultural heritage (intended as a branch of cultural economics), the Covid-related crisis of cultural tourism (intended as an economic activity), the new opportunities of cultural education and business offered by the ICTs, and the contribution of a digital fruition of cultural services to quality of life. The contamination among the four areas of interest finds its *raison d'être* in the human aspiration

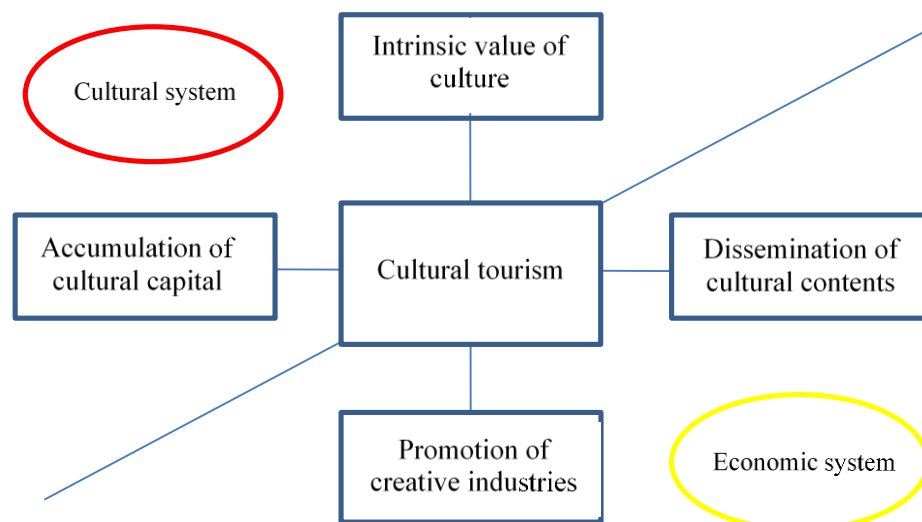
and need to preserve, visit, and appreciate cultural assets – i.e., monuments, churches, museums, historical and archaeological sites, cities of art, etc. – as part of the human common cultural heritage, but also as an important (and exclusive) source of leisure. The former concern can be traced back to the first North European tourists that travelled through Europe to discover the classical and medieval heritage of the continent, while the latter issue is rather part of the traditional market conceptualization of culture intended as a luxury good. Of course, cultural tourism was already a widespread activity among the rich strata of Greek and Roman population, but during Early Middle Ages it was almost abandoned as a leisure-related practice. It is only during the XVI century that cultural tourism flourished again among the young British aristocrats as part of their intellectual education. With the Industrial revolution, modern tourism became a fundamental human right, and at the half of the XX century mass tourism thrived among all population strata. However, since few decades ago cultural tourism was still considered a form of alternative tourism with respect, for example, to natural tourism, and seaside and mountains, rather than the cultural heritage, were considered the most attractive resources. Recently, cultural tourism has grown of importance also as a form of mass and social tourism, and nowadays it represents a very promising field of analysis, deeply influenced by personal motivations and cultural inclinations, as well as by the economic interests of tourist employees.

In fact, various determinants of the decision to travel, such as the search for authenticity in the tourist experience, the fragmentation of holidays, and the growth of a visual culture, are facilitated by the ability of art to easily cross the cultural, social, political, and physical borders in a globalized era. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that the cultural resources of a territory are not limited to monuments, churches, museums, archaeological sites, etc., as they also encompass a wide array of intangible assets related to the local identity. Indeed, culture is an integral part of the collective memory of a place and provides a significant

contribution to the elaboration of its current and future specificities. Also, it is a means for creating more cohesive societies, for promoting social integration processes, and for enabling lifelong learning processes in non-formal contexts. Finally, local roots are among the most important determinants in the interactions between economy and culture.

Based on these premises, cultural tourism, being at the crossroads between the cultural and the economic system, may be framed in Throsby’s scheme and may be conceived as a crucial activity in the effort of making economic development more culturally sustainable. Specifically, it means that cultural tourism could be a mediator among the intrinsic value of the cultural heritage and the technologically and financially driven trajectories of economic development, by promoting, on the one hand, the valorization of culture both at individual and institutional level, and, on the other hand, the commercialization and digital dissemination of cultural contents, making development more culturally sustainable.

Figure 2. Cultural tourism as a mediator



Source: our elaboration, 2021

## **2. Overview of art, culture, and tourism before, in, and after pandemic times**

It is a widely recognized fact that artistic and cultural resources, and their management, can contribute to the economic sustainability of a country in different ways: they can be a direct source of revenues, they can generate additional opportunities for tourism businesses and, more generally, they can have positive effects in other sectors. In fact, art and culture enhance cohesion and social integration, and can be viewed as pillars for the culturally sustainable development of territories. To the scope of this research, it is worth noting how culture and art have often been considered as public goods for several reasons that have been well illustrated by Ginsburg (2012). Furthermore, artistic activities are said to produce non-pecuniary as well as “economic externalities” (ibidem, pp.3-4).

Laying on these premises, it is worth noting how culture and tourism are deeply interconnected driving forces of the Italian economy (Vv. Aa., 2019). In fact, Italy hosts the highest number of Unesco World Heritage Sites and in the collective imagination it is often considered as a “temple of culture”. Thus, Italy has a qualitatively and quantitatively extraordinary cultural heritage (tangible and intangible), which instrumentally – that is, beside its intrinsic value – may constitute an important resource for the country both in social and economic terms.

Italian cultural sites and art collections are particularly attractive at world level, and Italy could be considered as a vast open-air museum, where the cultural landscape becomes itself the exhibited artwork (Lemme, 2010). Furthermore, the national territory is extremely rich in museums, galleries, collections, archaeological parks, and monumental complexes that provide a priceless testimony of the history and of the civilization of the country. The cultural component, therefore, exerts a great motivational support to the conceptualization of Italy as a tourism destination and to the promotion of the numerous products and services of the so called “made in Italy”. Yet, despite the vast cultural offer of the Italian territory, tourism



inflows are mainly concentrated in the museums and archaeological parks of few cities (Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan, etc.). The polarizing force of the main cities of art results in an unequal distribution of tourist flows throughout the national territory, that determines an insufficient use of resources in some territories and overload of flows in a few places which are often at risk of congestion and overtourism (Vv. Aa., 2019).

Few data may help to quantify these issues. In 2018, in Italy there were 4,908 museums, archaeological areas, monuments and eco-museums open to the public, most of them (around 70%) publicly owned, 14% owned by religious institutions and 16% privately owned (ISTAT, 2019). In Rome, 32 public museums and state monuments were counted, that become 46 also considering the archaeological areas. It means a number of publicly owned cultural sites that is almost twice as Paris, four times as London and about ten times as New York. And there are about 160 non-publicly owned sites, for an overall sum of more than 200 places of cultural interest.

By observing the distribution of the historical and cultural heritage broken down by macro area, a concentration of museums and monuments in the regions of Northern Italy emerges (46.2%), while the situation is reversed when considering only the archaeological sites, as in Southern Italy is located a share of 50.8% of archaeological heritage, while the Islands host a share of 30.7% (ISTAT, 2019). Furthermore, considering the ranking of the top 10 museums and archaeological areas by number of visitors in 2018, it is worth noting how more than half of visitors are concentrated in the cities of Rome and Florence, as six out of the top ten museums are in one of the two cities. Finally, visitors to cultural sites in Italy grew rapidly in the last ten years. According to ISTAT (2019), over 128 million people, of which 58.6 foreigners, visited the Italian cultural institutions in 2018, with an increment of 8% compared to 2017. In particular, the data on tourist inflows show how the Lazio region

hosted an increasing number of visitors, mostly international tourists, certainly attracted by the city of Rome.

Finally, it is worth noting how, despite a progressive diffusion and application of digital technologies across cultural institutions, in 2018 only 6.1% of state museums that have digital catalogues (most of which are located in Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont, Veneto, Lombardy and Tuscany) were able to make them accessible online, while only 9.8% made virtual visits of the places and collections owned available to users on their websites (the largest number of these museums are located in Veneto, Abruzzo, Lombardy and Liguria). The results are more positive for online communication and information: four out of ten museums have a dedicated website (43.7%) and almost two thirds (65.9%) have an account on the most important social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).

This scenario, however, represents a picture taken before the Covid-19 emergency. Indeed, the Covid Crisis severely hit the tourism sector at all scales, leading numerous private activities to bankruptcy and exacerbating price competition in the attempt to serve the few consumers still interested in tourism. The increasing movement towards cities of art and places of cultural interest faced an unpredictable fall and shift towards places considered safer such as mountain and seaside destinations, rural areas, villages etc. So, if on the one hand the development of cultural tourism has been linked to a widespread increase in the level of education combined with a general increase in income, which has led some segments of demand to spend more resources on travel and experiences to enrich the inner aspects of the personality, it is also worth noting how a high income and a high-quality level of education are not the only determinants of this phenomenon (Cocco, 2020). As already happened during the early middle ages, the increased risks related to the journeys reduced dramatically the tourism flows across the globe. Looking ahead, despite the easing of the restrictions currently in force, it is likely that the activities and services of museums usually

carried out on-site and which involve a collective physical presence of the public will be penalized: among these, live performances, and cultural initiatives, organized by 70.7% of state museums, and conferences and/or seminars hosted in their spaces by over half (56.7%) of these structures. The training activities, courses and educational projects for children and adults carried out by 58% of state museums, which in 2018 involved more than one million users, could be severely limited due to the virus containment measures (ISTAT, 2020).

To the scope of this research, the fall in tourism inflows has relevant implications, as the cultural heritage (especially cultural sites) is mostly composed of fixed assets that cannot be located elsewhere, either for physical reasons, either for the existence of specific regulatory frameworks that forbid the movement of artworks beyond the national boundaries. Therefore, as it can be reasonably assumed that the Covid Crisis will have dramatic effects on cultural tourism at least in the mid-term, if not in the long run, it is of interest to investigate how marketable and non-marketable cultural goods and services may be distributed to the wider public, either to contribute to the human and social progress, either to generate culturally sustainable economic value. A key issue may be deepening the ongoing process of cultural heritage digitalization; however, this approach may require as a prerequisite a progress in the management and marketing of cultural resources. As an indirect effect, the latter may induce a rebalance of power in favor of an economic conceptualization of culture. Specifically, the following section focuses on the management of museums and on the challenge of triggering a process of digital social innovation as a foundation for the online fruition of cultural goods and services.

### **3. Discussion: digital cultural experiences as a source of knowledge? A focus on museums**

In the Italian and European panorama, in recent decades there has been a radical transformation of the tourism sector, triggered from a shift in travels motivations, now focused on a quest for authenticity, experiences and emotions. In this dynamic scenario, most cultural institutions have faced the challenge of adapting to the rapid change of consumers' preferences. Among the numerous typologies of cultural institutions (theatres, libraries, etc.) this research focuses on the actions implemented by museums.

Museums change over time, as, on the one hand, they are organized around the art collections that they are entitled to preserve, while on the other hand they evolve according to the form of the place where the experience is created. Inside museums, visitors can experience authentic, stimulating, and formative experiences, and, in line with the transformation of visitors' preferences, and of contemporary tourists' tastes, research in the field of museum marketing has focused on the role of visitors within museum spaces. Indeed, visitors are no longer perceived as mere spectators, but as an active part of the cultural experience.

Nowadays, museums promote experiential contents that are consumed in close combination with culture. Consequently, rather than mere containers of art collections, contemporary museums are places that generate emotions, amazement, and stimuli, also by means of installations that are evocative or provocative, that is, that can influence individuals, generating further perceptive stimuli and personal inspiration. Museum's capability to attract and satisfy visitors' interests and curiosities is thus inseparably linked to their ability to offer a unique package of experiences. In other words, the interaction with the wider public follows the principles of experiential and emotional marketing, according to which in buying an experience, consumers pay to spend part of their time enjoying a memorable event, staged specifically to attract their attention and to make them feel personally involved.

Parallel to the reformulation of cultural and experiential services, the development of media and new technologies have made of speed and diversification key elements for development strategies, creating a great competition to capture visitors' interests. Furthermore, the declining appeal of globalized trends and the increasing attractiveness of diversity, as well as the advent of the experience economics (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) and of the emotional marketing, and the subsequent proliferation of virtual experiences, have alimanted a great desire to access what is original.

In brief, an increased interest in specific cultural products, as well as a greater frequency of visits can be observed, especially among the less educated strata of population, and that may prelude to the advent of a cultural mass tourism shaped by the principles of experiential, emotional, and digital marketing. The dynamism and fluidity of those digital technologies that have fostered the recent evolution of knowledge have also influenced the transformation of public, cultural and social spaces. In this panorama, the digital revolution and the cultural industries are innovating cultural institutions (Vv. Aa., 2016). Amid a cultural and digital revolution, the rise of virtual reality is compensated by a renewed need of living real experiences and real face-to-face interactions, and this is even more important after the upsurge of the Covid Crisis and the subsequent adoption of social distancing measures. Of course, while waiting for a “new tourist normality” after the pandemic and given the renewed need for social distancing to limit the contagion, the offer of experiential and emotional products, which often involve different types of individuals, from the local community to local actors, etc., may appear inadequate. However, through technological and digital innovation, a new inclusive and virtual market of cultural and emotional experiences could be created, which may provide new social interactions coherent with the principles of cultural sustainability and compliant with the limitations imposed by the Covid Crisis.

Here, it is worth mentioning how the broadly intended tourism experience is nowadays enriched on a new meaning, that consists in sharing memories, feelings, and emotions lived while exploring the territory and while interacting with the local community. Every phase of the journey can be turned into an experience and can generate emotional contents, and therefore also the choice of destination and travel modality in recent decades have been conditioned by social transformations, interests, and attention to experiential tourism. In fact, tourism and cultural operators are witnessing a boom in paths that, due to the commitment of local communities, associations and the third sector, and, above all, of museums, may attract “an exponentially growing number of people, each with their own motivation, with their own specific needs and with their own propensity to expense” (Bozzato, Ceschin, Ferrara, 2017).

Very frequently, memories are shared not only through simple word of mouth but are made viral through virtual world-of-mouth (e-WoM) and social networks. Not surprisingly, in recent years, tourism has seen the spread, in a totally spontaneous way, of new professional figures able to influence the purchasing decisions of the wider public, thanks to their notoriety, knowledge, position and relationship with their own public of active users on social media (for example influencers, streamers, travel bloggers, etc.). The digital network, in fact, has exponentially increased the opportunities of social interactions and of participation of individuals. Therefore, in a context of forced physical distancing caused by the current health emergency, the travel experience could evolve, not only because of the renewed needs of tourists, but also through the dissemination of cultural experiences on digital platforms. Furthermore, the virtualization of the cultural experience could find a new purpose in supporting an accessible, responsible, inclusive, and sustainable cultural tourism. In fact, the offer of digitalized cultural experiences and emotions could be considered, at first glance, intrinsically inclusive and accessible, as, with adequate support in case of digital

illiteracy, it could be accessible to a wider public than that one experiencing traditional cultural tourism. Furthermore, it could be considered responsible and sustainable, as it may partially contribute to avoiding overtourism by offering an alternative opportunity of fruition of cultural contents.

Virtual tours and online cultural experiences have provided populations in the period of the lockdown with a form of entertainment and have enhanced a deterritorialized fruition of culture. Of course, it is hard to claim that an innovative market of digital cultural experiences has been able to compensate the devastating health and socioeconomic impact caused by the pandemic in the first half of 2020 by fostering social distancing and providing new opportunities of business, nor it will be able to compensate the lack of tourist flows and of economic revenues on many territories. However, virtual cultural experiences have attracted the attention of cultural and tourist operators in developing and selling on the market, where possible, alternative services. As an example, it is worth noting how some museum sites have decided to expand and enhance digital activities by creating online cultural experiences. This is the case of the Uffizi Gallery, which launched a social campaign “Uffizi Decameron”, that has become a virtual refuge and brought art into homes, through “virtual mini-tours” in which museum assistants have illustrated some of the most suggestive corners of the Galleries, with their secrets and their works. Also, the main OTAs (i.e., Airbnb, etc.), the local TO and the freelance tour guides, too, proposed online experiences on the digital platforms (i.e., using both Webinar platform as Zoom, Teams, or social platforms as Instagram tv, or Facebook live).

In this context, the massive consumption of virtual experiences could have unpredictable impacts and may prelude to at least three scenarios: i) it may turn out to be an alternative proposal that may complement and integrate traditional tourism, without imagining further developments or significant impacts on the future of the tourism market; ii) it may be a

stimulus for ICT users to discover new territories and destinations, previously unexplored, thus acting instrumentally as a promotional tool, feeding user's interests in making a trip to the territory explored virtually; iii) it may turn into a threat for the tourism market, discouraging the potential tourist from exploring a certain territory already experienced virtually and safely – perhaps, also comfortably –, and at a cost that is certainly lower than the amount of money needed to cover all the expenses of a trip.

However, considering the digital market of cultural experiences and emotions as a perfect substitute of cultural tourism is naïve, and the economic added value of digital tourism cannot compensate what tourism operators have lost in a few months in terms of revenues. In brief, even if the digital experiences and emotions may completely overturn – in the short run and in the specific context of the Covid Crisis – the concepts underlying cultural tourism, in the mid-term, at most of all in the long run, diversities among the two activities will emerge and cultural tourism, including the travel experience, will recover its role of mediator among the cultural and the economic system.

Therefore, the contingent form of touristic offer emerged during the spread of the pandemic, based on the exploration of the web in search for cultural experiences and emotions that may compensate the lack of fruition of real and territorialized contents, could be renamed cyber cultural tourism, to emphasize the possibility of living a “remote tourist experience” as an imperfect substitute of a tourism experience “on the field”. However, there are many doubts already highlighted by cultural and tourism operators on the rise of this new type of offer, which was the only protagonist in a period of generalized crisis, and it may survive even after the emergency period. Specifically, traditional operators fear that the availability of remote experiences will lead to a distortion in the way of experiencing tourism, which could result in a possible loss of interest by at least a share of potential visitors, with negative economic consequences for the businesses and negative economic impacts in terms of well-



being for tourists themselves. While it is hard to confirm or reject these feelings, it is worth noting how the pandemic phenomenon has created a renewed interest for ICTs and for many professionals operating in the field of digital communication. In this perspective, it may be of interest to imagine a role for digital experiences in the post-pandemic recovery of tourist destinations. In fact, cyber tourism could act as an inclusive and popular source of information, and as an alternative tool for communicating the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of territories, even the most marginal ones.

Indeed, the online experience as an alternative means of communication and information of places could replace face-to-face storytelling, representing an evolution of it. The online experience, in fact, would strengthen the basic elements of the narrative communication tools such as awareness, understanding and empathy between tourists and territories and could promote a widespread knowledge of the cultural heritage. So, if on the one hand, storytelling, as a narrative form focusing on the tourist, adapts to the experience (Aaker, Aaker, 2016), on the other hand, virtual experiences and emotions may create new connections among cyber tourists and the territories explored virtually, to the point of creating an even greater empathy than that one provided by the storytelling. Furthermore, a wide array of innovative goods and services may become accessible to the wider public, and that may contribute both to the human and social progress, and to generate culturally sustainable economic value.

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

Virtual experiences and online tours have proven to be important sources of entertainment during pandemics. They are innovative services that open new scenarios and could be an opportunity to “sign museums on the map” as a form of communication and storytelling of

the cultural heritage. Consequently, they may contribute to spreading the knowledge of the cultural heritage as a form of spatial innovation diffusion (Hägerstrand, 1953).

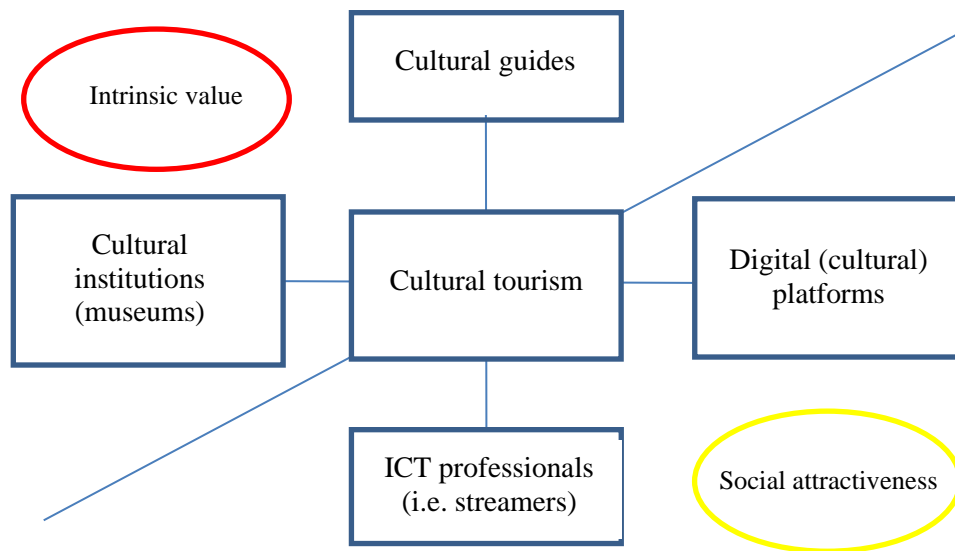
If, on the one hand, the increased popularity of virtual contents elaborated according to the principles of emotional marketing may have negative impacts on cultural tourism and on museums' visitors-related revenues, on the other hand virtual experiences could rise people awareness of cultural resources, providing an authentic storytelling of cultural institutions and art collections. In this panorama, a negative concern for the cyber cultural tourism may evolve in favor of the research of a synergic approach where the exploration of the web in search for virtual cultural contents may facilitate more accurate touristic and cultural choices. Lying on these premises, cyber tourism could be analyzed more in depth as an important vehicle of culturally sustainable development. The Covid Crisis made manifest the lack of digitalization of Italian museums, implicitly providing evidence in favor of the hypothesis elaborated by Frey (1994), that is, the interest of cultural managers in social digital innovation may be limited due to lack of economic incentives and high opportunity costs (i.e. financial and human resources employed in the process of digitalization may have alternative and more pertinent uses, as for example, a better maintenance of the art collections). In this approach, the digitalization of cultural institutions may be outsourced to operators that may have an interest in it (streamers, influencers, bloggers, designers...) and regulated and oriented by the cultural institutions themselves through monetary and non-monetary incentives (i.e., labels, crowdsourcing initiatives, etc.). However, this is not an easy task, as there are numerous obstacles of political and technical nature that should be tackled (i.e., in many museums indoor virtual experiences are forbidden, photos and video-galleries cannot be published to protect their masterpieces; etc.).

Beside the opportunities offered by experience and emotional marketing, the digital revolution may facilitate more structural changes of museums' structures. Indeed, in the next

future it will be necessary to rethink some services and some activities, and to reduce the excessive concentration of visitors in the same places by enhancing less popular destinations. For example, to redistribute the public and reduce physical contact, in compliance with the ongoing social distancing measures, it could be useful to improve the online ticketing service, currently offered by less than three out of ten state museums (23.5%), which would allow citizens to book visits remotely as well as to rationalize and manage flows more efficiently. More in general, the implementation of digital platforms pursuing the dissemination of cultural contents, information and services may indirectly benefit the cultural tourism sector, as: i) more people may find an interest in consuming cultural services, ii) well-informed tourists may take more accurate decisions concerning their cultural consumption choices, and iii) new digital services, based on the diffuse availability of internet and exploiting the popularity of ICT professionals, influencer, blogger, etc. may enrich the touristic and travel experience, unveiling new connections between the cultural and the economic system. In sum, while cultural tourism was mostly focused on cultural institutions and on the intrinsic value of culture, the spread of Covid-19 and its socioeconomic consequences have accelerated a process of recognition of two additional elements, mostly related to the economic dimension, that may produce cultural tourism-related added value: i) the opportunities offered by the new economy and by the digital revolution to implement digital platforms providing online cultural services and information; ii) the rise of blogger, influencers, streamers, and other ICT professionals related to the popular economy, that may contribute to increase the social attractiveness of cultural tourism. Figure 3 broadly illustrates this issue and suggests how the social value of cultural tourism is made of at least two components: the intrinsic value that people may assign to the cultural heritage and, more in general, to the cultural system, and the social attractiveness of cultural experiences nurtured by means of dedicated digital platforms by ICT professionals.

Figure 3. Cultural tourism: a focus on main actors

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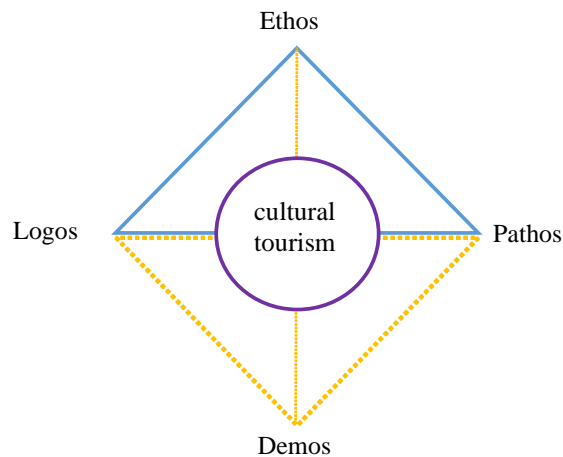


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Source: our elaboration, 2021

Finally, the innovative approach to cultural tourism proposed in this research, based on a mix of real and digital contents, may contribute to identify new issues in emotional marketing, concerning the importance of developing well-informed digital narratives and the need of identifying and interacting with popular trends while planning a culturally sustainable touristic fruition and offer. This issue is succinctly illustrated in Figure 4, where the innovative approach to cultural tourism proposed in previous analyses is now explained through a re-visitation of the emotional marketing framework. Specifically, a new element (namely, “Demos”) has been added to the Aristotle triangle (based on three dimensions, that are “Pathos”, “Ethos”, and “Logos”), obtaining a four-dimensional logical framework.

Figure 4. The emotional marketing framework revisited: an application to cultural tourism



Source: our elaboration on <https://www.start2impact.it/blog/marketing/emotional-marketing/>, 2021.

In the Aristotle triangle, we place “Logos” (i.e., cultural education) at the foundation of the activities of cultural institutions, “Pathos” (i.e., cultural attractiveness) at the foundation of the activities of culture-related digital platforms, and “Ethos” (i.e., a mix of cultural expertise and marketing skills that may unveil the multifaceted value of culture) at the foundation of the activity touristic guides and other professionals operating in the cultural tourism sector. Finally, we place “Demos” (i.e., the capability of influencing popular trends and creating new one) at the foundation of the activity of ICT professionals and other social communicators. Thus, considering the historical evolution of cultural tourism, we suggest how a renewed focus on the implementation of dedicated digital platforms and more attention paid to the analysis and development of popular trends may contribute to identifying new opportunities of business and to radically innovating cultural tourism, increasing both its intrinsic and its economic, while fostering its culturally sustainability.

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