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A Meta-Synthesis Study of Sustainable Development of Cultural Tourism at World Heritage Sites

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Abstract

This study presents a significant contribution to the field of sustainable cultural tourism at world heritage sites, a crucial area in light of the World Tourism Organization's (WTO) projections for 2030. Employing a comprehensive and integrated approach, the research systematically synthesizes existing qualitative studies to address the question of sustainable development in this context. A rigorous meta-synthesis, following the methodology of Sandelowski and Barroso, was applied to 43 scientifically credible articles selected via the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP). This selection process ensured the inclusion of high-quality research. The study's major intellectual contribution is the development of a new paradigmatic model for understanding sustainable cultural tourism at world heritage sites. This model was constructed using Grounded Theory Strategy and Maxqda2020 software, facilitating a structured analysis and interpretation of the data. The model organizes 99 primary codes into 20 main and secondary categories, providing a comprehensive framework that encapsulates the core phenomena of the field. Moreover, the study's findings are further validated through the use of Cohen's kappa Coefficient in SPSS, achieving a score of 0.714, which experts have confirmed. This statistical validation underscores the reliability of the research outcomes. Overall, this study not only synthesizes a wide range of existing qualitative research but also advances the field by offering a novel model and ensuring the reliability of its findings. These contributions are particularly relevant for policy makers and practitioners focused on the sustainable development of tourism, especially in the context of preserving cultural heritage at world heritage sites.

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Introduction

Sustainable development is a complicated concept introduced in early 1980s in Brundtland Commission but still doesn't have a comprehensive definition over which all have consensus. However, the most popular definition was offered by World Commission on Environment and Development: "Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"(Cerin, et al., 2006). Tourism is one of the largest international industries and cultural tourism benefits a rapid growth. From 1980s onward, cultural tourism has been recognized as main resource for economic growth of many destinations (OECD, 2016). Therefore, tourism role in the development of destinations' cultural attractions is an important subject in international tourism. Based on WTO predictions, the number of international tourists would run into 1.8 billion in 2030 (WTO, 2011). Also, Regarding WTO statistics, 1.4 billion tourists have travelled all over the world in 2018 (WTO, 2019). Culture has always been an indispensable part of travelling where Grand Tours development in 16th century proves it (Towner, 1985). Now in 21th century, although culture is an attraction for tourists, tourism itself is a kind of culture (Urry, 1990). It is important to the extent that UNESCO (the only UN agency specialized in culture) has declared culture as the most substantial issue of tourism industry in 21th century. Thus, UNESCO as International Culture Agency motivates countries to expand cultural tourism model in order to protect and maintain cultural and natural heritage (Boafo, 2011). Cultural and natural heritage as development resource has always attracted a large number of tourists to different countries. Although tourism provides an opportunity for developing cultural and natural heritage, if managed poorly, it could turn into a threat. The latter is a superior, sensitive and responsible kind of tourism which is a supplement for sustainable tourism concept (Swarbrooke, 1999). Sustainable cultural tourism offers a new perspective because it puts cultural heritage and local communities at the center of the decision-making process (European Commission, 2020). Hence, this study aims to depicts the necessity of sustainable development in cultural tourism using systematic review with meta-synthesis approach. Thus, it should be considered more seriously in planning and policy-making at world heritage sites.

This study tries to offer a comprehensive and integrated approach in order to systematically merge the qualitative studies done so far and has formed based on this question: "How is sustainable development of cultural tourism at world heritage sites?" Searching scientific databases shows that there has been no similar study for identifying, categorizing, analysing and interpreting these issues and suggesting a model. So, this study is an innovation of its own kind. At last, this study suggests a sustainable, holistic and comprehensive approach for tourism development in cultural destinations. As mentioned above, considering the lack of a comprehensive study about cultural tourism sustainable

development, the findings of this study can offer an integrated version of those researches with an interpretive approach. Its results can be used as a comprehensive resource for other researchers and as an effective step towards future studies. Thus, the results are not only useful for researcher but also for planners and policymakers of tourism and cultural heritage to follow a sustainable approach in developing cultural tourism destinations.

Theory

Sustainable Tourism development

Sustainable tourism development refers to the management of all tourism-related resources in a manner that meets economic, social, and aesthetic needs while conserving cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biodiversity and survival systems (Ngoc et al., 2021). It is a concept born out of recognition of the significant impacts, both positive and negative, that tourism can have on destinations and communities. Economic sustainability is one of the main pillars of sustainable tourism development (Grilli et al., 2021). It ensures that tourism activities contribute to the overall economic prosperity of a destination, providing income and employment opportunities to local communities. Social sustainability is an essential component other key, focusing on the impact of tourism on the community (Achmad & Yulianah, 2022; Yalçinkaya & Güzel, 2022). The aim is to ensure that tourism development enhances the quality of life of local people, respects the host community and its cultural heritage, and leads to the distribution of benefits. benefit fairly. Environmental sustainability is also an important aspect. This involves managing the impact of tourism on the natural environment, ensuring that development is compatible with the conservation of essential ecological processes, biodiversity and biological resources (Mateoc-Sîrb et al., 2022). The role of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development is extremely important. This includes the participation of local communities, tourists, tourism businesses, governments and NGOs (Katemliadis & Markatos, 2021). Each group has different roles and responsibilities to achieve sustainability. Applying sustainable tourism development methods can bring various benefits (Walker & Lee, 2021). This includes protecting and preserving natural and cultural resources, forming the foundation of tourism, improving the quality of life of the people, better experiences for tourists through sustaining healthy environments and vibrant communities, and economic benefits. through sustainable use of resources, can contribute to job creation and income generation.

Cultural Heritage Tourism

The term heritage is defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as “our heritage from the past, what we live today and what we pass on to our ancestors.

future generations”, and this is not limited to specific collections (monuments or objects); it also includes oral traditions, social practices and rituals, as well as practices and customs related to nature and the universe (UNESCO, 2023). For this reason, it is divided into tangible and intangible cultural heritage in literature. There are general prerequisites for values to be considered heritage, both in the tangible and intangible realm. “For a value to be considered cultural heritage, it must be rooted in the past and must be considered important enough to be transferable to the future for one or more reasons. Poria et al. (2003, p. 248) believes that cultural heritage tourism must be defined by tourists’ motivations not by features of the site. Thus, based on their definition, the heritage sites are defined by tourist motivations, their perception of the site and whether they see themselves as a part of that heritage”.

Then, Poria’s definition was rejected by Garrod and Fyall, because it had ignored the supply dimension and was all about the demand dimension (tourists). Hence, the suppliers who offer the attraction to the market should be considered as well. Gunn (1993, p. 58) explains attractions as developed locations planned and managed to make visitors interested and attracted and feel them with joy. But Millar (1989, p. 116) showed that cultural tourism attractions couldn’t be classified in the same category with other recreational attractions. While other attractions could be developed and updated through time and when getting old and worn, it is impossible for heritage attractions to be renewed again. The reason is that in most cases cultural heritage resources are irrecoverable and to some extent irreplaceable. Thus, the nature of heritage attractions is different from other attractions. In short, the definitions for cultural heritage tourism include three main factors: 1) heritage as a contemporary product offered to satisfy the perceived needs of the audience (tourists), 2) production and service-giving processes in target markets, and 3) intervention (if needed) in all phases from choosing heritage resources to goal-setting in the market (UNWTO, 2016). Another key point is that given the growth of heritage tourism industry, certain obstacles and problems are inevitable. Meanwhile, managing the relation between cultural heritage tourism, local community and tourists’ behaviours and experiences is essential in heritage attractions management (Patwardhan et al., 2019).

World heritage sites

Given the remarkable growth of tourism, visiting cultural and historical resources is one of the largest, most comprehensive and growing sections of the tourism industry in the present era. In fact, it seems that heritage tourism is growing much faster than other forms of tourism, especially in developing countries, and should be considered as a potentially important tool for poverty alleviation and economic development of society (UNWTO, 2005). The interest in culture varies among tourists depending on their tastes, which can be architecture, sightseeing, and cultural interests. As mentioned

in Manila declaration, WTO do not consider the economic revenue as ultimate goal of tourism industry but tourism has to improve the living quality of local communities without putting their local culture in danger (Feilden & Jokilehto, 1998). Tourism in heritage sites gives visitors full exposure and appreciation of the beauty of stunning natural landscapes. In addition, WNHS also helps shape the country's image and promote the brands of tourist destinations (Kim et al., 2019; Wang & Yuan, 2020). In general, the relation between world heritage and sustainable tourism shows that heritage as remains of a nation history can be an efficient way to clearly introduce the culture of a nation or country leading to mutual understanding and international relations. Tourism is one of those tools that makes this happen. Thus, what is perceived as world cultural heritage doesn't belong to a certain community but to all societies. Identifying, protecting, conserving, introducing and optimal using of natural and historical heritage are what makes the bond between tourism industry and cultural heritage stronger. As a special tourist destination, a WNHS is unique in the tourism industry due to the outstanding scientific and aesthetic value of its natural resources (Zhang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021). Based on UNESCO declaration in 2023, 1199 historical, natural and mixed sites have been categorized based on natural and cultural criteria in the 168 countries of five main regions (Africa; Arab countries; Asia and Pacific; Europe and North America; Latin America and Caribbean) with 933, 227 and 39 cultural, natural and mixed sites respectively. 26 countries have no registered site in UNESCO world heritage list. Based on latest statistics in UNESCO website at 8 Oct 2023, Italy with 59 registered sites is at top of the list (UNESCO, 2023).

Procedures

In two recent decades, several studies have been conducted in tourism sustainable development, cultural tourism and world heritage sites. The results are different. Thus, we need to combine the results in order to offer a more comprehensive interpretation and categorization. To achieve this goal, a scientific method called "Meta-study" is used to investigate and combine the results of conducted studies by different researchers. Like other qualitative studies based on meta-synthesis strategy, this study also starts with a question: "how is the sustainable development of cultural tourism at world heritage sites?" Since the gathered data is qualitative, it was collected using meta-synthesis method. Based on the main question of study, this method aims at offering a creative and integrated interpretation of qualitative findings (Beck, 2002).

Meta-synthesis focuses on qualitative studies with limited theoretical foundations and offers a synthetic interpretation of findings rather than a comprehensive abstract of them (Zimmer, 2006). Therefore, to investigate and interpret past studies using a systematic approach, the meta-synthesis strategy was used in the study. In general, nine-fold methods are introduced by Noblit & Hare; and

Sandelowski & Barroso for investigating meta-synthesis among which Grounded Theory Synthesis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used in this study (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007; Noblit & Hare, 1988). In this method, theoretical saturation is the indicator of qualified sample (Ghasemi & Rayat Pisheh, 2016). Meta-synthesis typically draws upon a representative sample of high-quality qualitative studies, selected based on their relevance to the research question and analyzed until theoretical saturation is achieved.

Performing meta-synthesis method has its own variety and ambiguity, so all authors perceive it as a complicated and challenging study method. In order to implement meta-study with meta-synthesis technic, this study uses the seven-stage model by Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) (Figure 1).

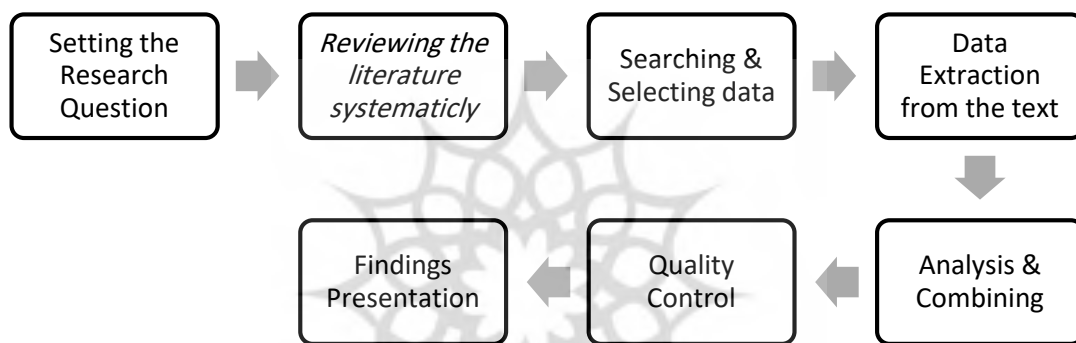


Figure 1. Research process

Results

In order to answer the main question, the practical stages of the study were implemented using seven-step meta-synthesis model by Sandelowski and Barroso (2007).

Step 1: Setting the research question

At this step which is the first stage of meta-synthesis study, fundamental questions including What? Who? When? How? are devised, while properly answering them guarantees meta-synthesis procedure and completes the study. Research questions and examined parameters are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Research questions and examined parameters based on step one

Step 2: Reviewing the literature in a systematic way

All documents and articles related to the research question were evaluated at this step. Appropriate studies were selected for meta-synthesis analysis. statistical population of the research includes all the studies conducted in this field so far. The keywords like “Tourism sustainable development”, “cultural tourism”, “cultural tourism sustainability” and “world heritage sites” were used for systematic searching in scientific databases like Web of science, Emerald, Science Direct and Elsevier. All databases were searched until end of Dec 2019. After thorough searching in international and domestic scientific databases, 348 documents were selected and saved for meta-synthesis analysis of cultural tourism sustainable development at world heritage sites. In qualitative studies, gathering samples will continue until theoretical saturation. In such studies, the sample size of 12 articles or less is normal (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Step 3: Searching & Selecting appropriate texts

At this stage, the researcher had to evaluate the quality of resources collected based on inclusive and exclusive keywords to omit low-credit articles. Critical Appraisal Skills Programs (CASP) is a useful tool usually used for quality assessment of primary findings and helps the researcher evaluate accuracy, credibility and importance of qualitative studies with 10 critical questions (CASP, UK, n.d.). At this stage, the researcher gave every question a quantitative score and each document was finally evaluated based on its overall score¹. Based on the essential evaluating skills template with a 50-score

1. Excellent (50-41), Very good (40-31), Good (30-21), Average (20-11) and Poor (10-0).

scale, each document with overall score less than good (below 30) was omitted and those documents with good and excellent scores (over 30) were used in the research. The next step was uploading them in Maxqda2018.1 to extract data. After searching scientific databases, 348 articles were selected and saved. After evaluating the articles to be aligned with the subject, question, goal and approach of the study, 164 articles were selected for primary evaluation. In the next stage, 86 articles were selected given their keywords and abstracts. Then, 54 articles were selected considering their methodology and conclusions; and finally, after studying whole papers and CASP template, 43 final articles were selected for the study.

Step 4. Data Extraction from the text

At this stage of qualitative meta-study (meta-synthesis), the researcher has to choose one of these nine-fold methods (Meta-ethnography, Grounded theory, Thematic Synthesis, Textual Narrative Synthesis, Meta-study, Meta-narrative, Critical Interpretive Synthesis, Ecological Triangulation, Framework Synthesis) given the subject and collected resources. This study used the Grounded Theory Synthesis to use of theoretical sampling to reach theoretical saturation; and the generation of new theory. to extract data from final resources. Thus, in order to improve quality level of the study, a summary of all documents was prepared and uploaded to Maxqda2018.1. Then, all documents were studied and analyzed based on Grounded Theory Strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and using Causes, Contextual Conditions, Strategies, Consequences, Intervening Conditions with Open, Axial and Selective coding. Since this study is systematic and uses Grounded Theory Technique, the codes were extracted from articles and the name of author and resources were written in front of each code (Table 1). Then, at a higher level than primary codes, more abstract sub-categories (main and secondary) were identified and defined to make room for results interpretation.

Step 5. Analysis & Combining the qualitative findings

after extracting data using Grounded Theory Method at previous step, this step focuses on analysing and interpreting qualitative finding of past studies to offer an integrated and systematic interpretation with new approach (Sandelowski & Barosso, 2007). First, given the concept of the codes, each recognized code is categorized in its related group. As a result, more abstract subcategories are generated, going beyond the codes. This interpretation encompasses all the articles included in the meta-synthesis and demonstrates the impact of each primary study within this integrated whole.

After analysing 43 final articles using content analysis, 99 primary codes were recognized. The list of these primary codes extracted from primary studies are shown in Tables 1. Then, considering

the categorization principles of codes, main and secondary subcategories were formed and finally axial and selective codes were identified (Table 1).

Table 1. Codes, Sub-category and categories of this research

Axial & selective Coding		Open Coding Capital				
Phenomenon	Axial Coding	Categories	Sub-Categories	CODES	REF	
<i>Cultural Tourism Sustainability on WHSS</i>	<i>Contextual conditions</i>	<i>Economic Perspective</i>	Resources		(Liu & Chen, 2015) (Ismagilova et al., 2015) (Adams, 2010) (Awang et al., 2014) (Carter et al., 2015) (UNWTO, 2004) (Swanson & Devereaux, 2012) (Camus et al., 2012) (Buckley, 2014) (Padin & Svensson, 2013) (Vargas-Hernández, 2012) (Borges et al., 2011) (Underberg-Goode, 2014)	
			Capital			
			Technology innovation			
			Labor			
		<i>Tourist volume</i>	Tourism income	average tourist expenditure per person		
				tax revenue from tourism		
				average tax rate		
				The ratio of the density of tourists to the local community		
			Degree of tourist satisfaction from cultural product innovation	rate multiplier from tourist satisfaction		
				degree of tourist satisfaction from crowding ratio		
				degree of tourist satisfaction		
				cultural product innovation ratio		
	technology multiplier					
	<i>Causal conditions</i>	<i>Resident participation volume in Tourism</i>	The number of human resources in tourism industry	nonresident participation volume in tourism		(Pakdeepinit, 2007) (Loulanskia & Loulanski, 2011) (Omar, 2013) (Awang et al., 2014) (Gurira & Ngulube, 2016) (Ismagilova, et al., 2015) (Amir et al., 2015) (Camus et al., 2012) (UNWTO, 2017) (Carter et al., 2015) (Bowitz & Ibenholt, 2009) (Nocca, 2017)
				community cultural elites ratio		
			Resident income from tourism	average wages from different tourism business		
				resident participation multiplier		
		<i>Value of WHSS</i>	Value added rate from capital investment multiplier	finance investment capital		
				protective investment capital from tax revenue		
				capital in tourism industries		
				donation capital		
				capital investment ratio		
			value added rate from human resources multiplier			
			value- added rate from cultural innovation multiplier			
Stakeholder Policy			Private Sector Initiatives			
	Local community policies					
	Public Sector Development Policies					

<i>Consequences</i>	<i>Improving of the local community</i>	Economic Benefits	Poverty Alleviation	(Durovic & Lovrentjev, 2014) (UNWTO, 2017) (Padin & Svensson, 2013) (Khlaikaew, 2015) (Amir et al., 2015) (Brcar & Colaric-Jakse, 2017) (Omar, 2013) (Wan & Li, 2013) (Nocca, 2017) (Pakdeepinit, 2007) (Ko, 2005)
			Income Generation	
			Collected Currencies	
			Institutional Characteristic	
			Seasonality	
			The development of transport related to tourism	
			Economic Development	
			Development of local products, arts and crafts and other attractions	
			Infrastructure development	
		Social-Cultural Benefits	enhances local community identity	(Loulanskia & Loulanski, 2011) (Padin & Svensson, 2013) (UNWTO, 2004) (Gurira & Ngulube, 2016) (Pakdeepinit, 2007) (Agyeiwaah et al., 2017) (Padin & Svensson, 2013) (Khlaikaew, 2015) (Amir et al., 2015)
			Local public safety	
			Protection of WHSs	
			Social Caring Capacity of Destination	
			social-Cultural impact	
			evolution of social-cultural effects	
			host – guest interaction	
			Improve the quality of life	
			Developing local festivals and foods	
			Development of cultural routes	
			Development of cultural facilities	
			The revival of the language and local culture	
			Strengthening the cultural identity of local people	
			Change the attitude of the host community	
			Preservation of ethnicities	
		Changing the nature of the host community		
		Environmental benefits	The emergence of socio-cultural consequences	(Buckley, 2014) (Omar, 2013) (Van & Li, 2013) (Borges et al., 2011) (Carter et al., 2015) (Brcar & Colaric-Jakse, 2017) (SU & WALL, 2012) (Nocca, 2017) (Carter et al., 2015) (Adams, 2010) (Underberg-Goode, 2014)
			Tourism increases the crime rate in cultural destinations	
			Increased population density	
			improving recreation opportunities	
			language change	
			Enable local community participation	
			Protecting the natural ecosystem around WHSs	
			Energy Management	
			Water availability and management	
		Wastewater treatment		
		Waste management		
Air pollution				
Manage the visual impact of facilities and infrastructure				
Intensity of use				
Environmental impact management				
Reduction of tourism damage to the natural environment				
Reasonable use of resources				

	World heritage sites	Protection	Legislative basis for protection	(Gurira & Ngulube, 2016) (Pakdeepinit, 2007) (Carter et al., 2015) (Brcar & Colaric-Jakse, 2017) (Padin & Svensson, 2013) (Khlaikaew, 2015) (Amir et al., 2015)
			Profile of the issue	
			Funding for protection	
			Designation	
			Condition of setting and environment	
			Threats to the integrity and authenticity of the property	
			Threat to the integrity of the property	
			Protecting activities at the transnational level	
			Preservation and protection of WHSs	
			Increasing the value of World Heritage Site	
	visitors of WHSs	Increase international visitors to WHSs		
		Visitor Satisfaction		
		Increase national visitors		
		Introducing and educating tourists with the local culture		
		Sustainability of tourist satisfaction and reversibility		
Strategies	Involving local people		(Wager, 1995) (Farid, 2015) (Jimura, 2011) (Caust & Vecco, 2017)	
	Marketing			
	Comprehensive development of World Heritage Sites			
	Integrated Management of World Heritage Site			
	Investment			
	Local community partnership with UNESCO			
Intervening Conditions	local community	threatened by processes of urbanization	(Carter et al., 2015) (Rodgers & Oers, 2011) (Awang et al., 2014) (Farid, 2015)	
		community engagement towards sustain-able		
	Structural and managerial	threaten heritage resources		
		land speculation and development		
		lack of governance and clarity regarding access to natural resources		
		inadequate financial capacity of government and NGOs		
		limitations of human resources		
		advice for challenges		

Step 6. Quality control

During the step of analysing resources (selected using coding method) and data (categorized using Grounded Theory technique), we strived to review and codify the extracted data over and over again to guarantee the quality of findings. Another tool to guarantee theoretical and practical validity of the study is expert opinion where the researcher asks two experts out of research procedure (who are expert at methodology and subject) to evaluate the reliability of the study. At this stage, the experts

were asked to give their opinions about choosing meta-synthesis method for the study, appropriateness and sufficiency of the resources, selecting process of final resources, and evaluating and scoring the resources based on CASP template. Fortunately, based on CASP template, quality of resources was reconfirmed by experts with a score slightly higher than 30. We strive to use Cohen's Kappa Coefficient to evaluate the size of agreement between two individuals, phenomena or decision-making resources that each one measures our two main quantities separately. To evaluate extracted results of the study, Kappa Agreement Coefficient was calculated in SPSS and the result was 0.712. Since the result is between 0.6 and 0.8, it can be concluded that the agreement coefficient has an acceptable level; all extracted articles analysed using meta-synthesis method are reliable and the study is valid.

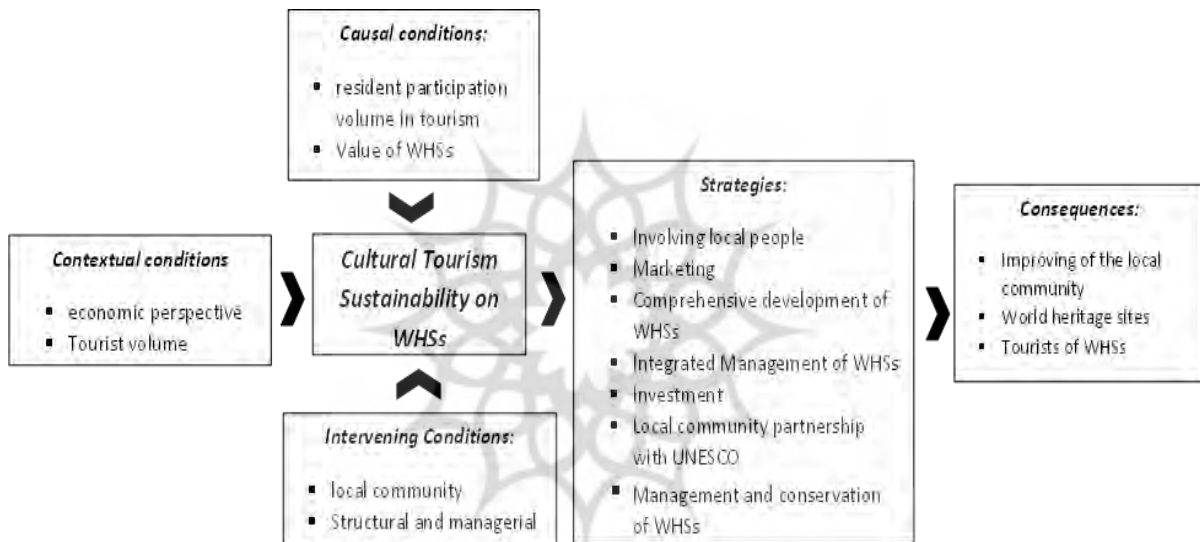


Figure 3. G.T Model for Sustainability of cultural tourism on World Heritage Site

Step 7. Findings Presentation

The main subject of the study based on Sandelowski & Barroso model (2007) was thoroughly discussed and evaluated in six previous steps of meta-synthesis procedure. The results show that 99 primary codes were recognized in the articles and in a more abstract stage, they were categorized in 20 main and secondary subcategories. 10 main categories include: Economic perspective, Tourist volume, Resident participation volume in tourism, Value of WHSs, Improving of the local community, world heritage sites, visitors of WHSs, Strategies, Local community, Structural and managerial. A population of 43 final resources and their subcategories in 5 axial codes with core phenomenon (Cultural tourism sustainability on WHSs) answered the original question of the study and max map of

them are depicted on Maxqda2018.1. At last, a paradigm model of cultural tourism sustainable development on world heritage site was devised (Figure 4)

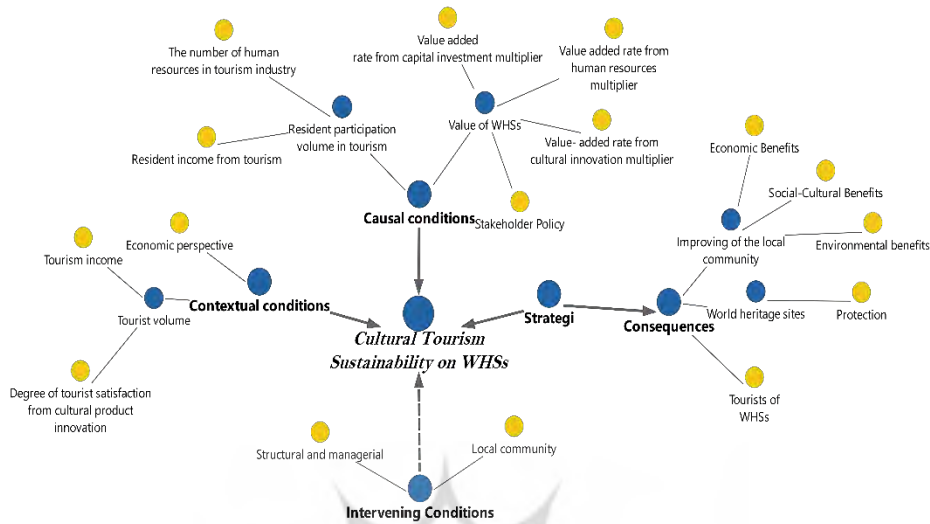


Figure 4. Paradigm model of Sustainability of world heritage site

Conclusions

This study synthesized 43 qualitative studies using Grounded Theory and found that its sustainability and axial concepts including components, effective factors, consequences, strategies and challenges had been evaluated individually and there isn't any paradigm model in this field. Hence, the ultimate goal of this article, beside recognizing the subject, is to offer a paradigm model in cultural tourism sustainable development based on a meta-synthesis method to evaluate sustainable development of cultural tourism at world heritage sites. Thus, 43 articles were selected and 99 codes and 20 main and secondary subcategories were recognized that are shown in Tables 1. Also the paradigm model extracted from Maxqda2018.1 is shown in Figure 4. This study has increased knowledge in tourism science from different perspectives. First, there has been no study to offer a paradigm model with meta-synthesis technique about this subject. Therefore, this methodology can be perceived as an innovation in tourism science. Second, some subcategories extracted from conceptual model are completely new and unique. For instance, putting the main subcategory of "resident participation volume in tourism" as a Causal Conditions in secondary subcategory of "the number of human resources in tourism industry" and "resident income from tourism" has never been done so completely in any other study. third, because of using meta-synthesis technique based on past studies, this research can be a comprehensive resource for other researcher interested in cultural tourism sustainable development and because of the paradigm model, it can also be used in quantitative

studies. Its fourth important attribute is that: regarding the holistic nature of the suggested model, it could be used at world heritage sites and at different organizations such as UNESCO.

Achieving a score of 0.714 validated through the use of Cohen's kappa Coefficient in SPSS showed agreement among experts that indicates the model's reliability. By applying this model, policymakers and practitioners can use sustainability paradigm in development of tourism in WHSs, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of cultural tourism and preservation of heritage at world heritage sites.

This study has potential limitations. As timeframe, The study focused on research published up to 2020, potentially overlooking newer developments and evolving perspectives in the field. Also, publication bias, by relying solely on published studies, the synthesis might have missed unpublished research or grey literature offering different viewpoints and Sample selection, the chosen studies might not fully represent the diversity of World Heritage Sites and cultural tourism contexts, limiting the generalizability of the findings to all such sites. Finally, the study focused primarily on World Heritage Sites and might not have comprehensively addressed other crucial dimensions like intangible heritages and other cultural sites.



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