



Available online at
ScienceDirect
www.sciencedirect.com

Elsevier Masson France
EM|consulte
www.em-consulte.com/en



Original article

The destruction of cultural heritage and international tourism: The case of the Arab countries

José L. Groizard*, María Santana-Gallego

Departament d'Economia Aplicada, Universitat de les Illes Balears, Ctra. de Valldemossa km 7,5, 07122 Palma de Mallorca, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 25 April 2017
Accepted 15 June 2018
Available online xxx

JEL classification:
F14
F51
H12
O11

Keywords:
Political stability
Terrorism
International tourism
Gravity model
Tourism development

ABSTRACT

World Heritage Sites (WHS) are in danger in some Arab countries that have suffered from conflict since the Arab Spring. Many countries base their development strategies on promoting cultural tourism by making use of their rich historical and artistic heritage. However, the literature has not clarified the benefit of having the nominations that UNESCO grants to the places that house such valuable cultural patrimony. Therefore, the impact of the loss of this heritage is also unclear. In this paper we estimate the economic loss that would result from total or partial damage to WHS. Our results indicate that WHS are a major cause of influx of tourists, especially to the Arab countries that are currently at risk of conflict. Our analysis finds that the disappearance of those sites classified as “in danger” by UNESCO would cause a minimum loss of around 12% of their tourism, with Libya and Syria being the most affected countries.

© 2018 Elsevier Masson SAS. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Tourism is generally viewed as a source of gains for developing countries because, as a labor-intensive industry, it provides income and jobs. Cultural and historical legacies are an important attraction for tourists in many destinations and therefore represent a fundamental resource for generating current and future inflows of tourists. However, current world conflicts, especially in the Middle East, are putting cultural heritage at risk and thus, are damaging the future development potential for these economies. For instance, in May 2015 the city of Palmyra, known as Tadmur, fell into the hands of Daesh. The jihadists not only caused hundreds of deaths among the civilian population, but also used the stage of the ancient Roman amphitheater as a place for executing a dozen government officials before destroying it. The majority of the population fled, and the well-known temples of Bel and Baal Shamin or the Arc of Triumph were dynamited in acts that the United Nations Educational, Scien-

tific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) described as war crimes. Considerable damage was done to the museum where it was found that most of those statues and sarcophagi that were too large to be removed for safekeeping had been defaced, smashed, had their heads severed, and were left lying on the ground in pieces. Consequently, in 2013 the World Heritage Committee decided to place the six World Heritage Sites (WHS) in the Syrian Arab Republic on the List of World Heritage in Danger so as to draw attention to the risks that they are facing because of the situation in which the country finds itself.

International tourism is highly sensitive to terrorism, conflicts, and political violence. Since tourists want to travel to safe places, if they see a risk of injury, death, or even just becoming involved in a stressful situation, they will avoid that destination. Several papers have explored the impact of terrorism and political instability on international tourism, to cite some examples, [1–4], and [5]. Recently, [6] and [7] have focused on analyzing the effects of the Arab Spring on international tourism, suggesting that the effects of conflicts spill over to other similar countries that are not directly affected by the social or political turmoil. However, the negative effects of these extreme socio-political conditions go beyond the short-term drop of inbound tourism. Groizard et al. [7] find evidence of the persistent effect of episodes of political instability on tourism demand which is likely due to the deterioration of

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: joseluis.groizard@uib.es (J.L. Groizard), maria.santana@uib.es (M. Santana-Gallego).

URLs: <http://www.uib.es/depart/deaweb/webpersonal/jlgroizard/> (J.L. Groizard), <http://www.uib.es/depart/deaweb/webpersonal/mariasantana/> (M. Santana-Gallego).

institutions. Terrorist attacks and political riots can also weaken infrastructure relevant to the tourism industry [2] and damage or destroy national treasures [3] that likely act as “pull factors”. The damage, or even the complete destruction, of the cultural legacy of a country, would instead permanently affect the recovery of the tourist activity after violent episodes or conflicts, and so would seriously compromise long-term economic prosperity.

Episodes of conflict in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region since the early 1990s have produced casualties, failed states and political instability. Failed states are unable to control their territory, lack legitimate authority to make collective decisions, and lack a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force. Examples of failed states are Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, and Mali. In countries affected by the Arab Spring (AS) in 2011, episodes of conflict have taken the form of political turmoil and yielded instability. In Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, civilian protests produced immediate political changes, and rulers were forced to resign from power. Political stability, however, was far from reached, especially in Libya.

This paper’s contribution to the existing literature is threefold. First, we contribute to the debate on the effects of WHS on inbound tourism by consistently estimating a gravity model for bilateral tourism flows and using a global panel dataset. Thus, our approach is more general than evidence presented for one particular country would be, and it allows us to explore the differential effect of WHS on tourism for Arab and Mediterranean regions compared to the rest of the world. Second, given the longitudinal data that we utilize, we are able to sort out important endogeneity biases that are present in previous literature by controlling for several types of fixed effects that are likely correlated with the number of WHS in the country. Moreover, given that we observe the number of WHS changing over time and across countries, our analysis is able to separate the effects of the patrimonial wealth that is particularly constant from the effect of the UNESCO recognition of being part of the World Heritage List (WHL). Third, we apply a counterfactual analysis to quantify tourism losses caused by the destruction of WHS in the MENA region under different scenarios.

Previous studies have explored the effect of the WHL, recognized by UNESCO, on tourism demand. The existence of the WHL represents an important source of publicity for tourism destinations. However, results of the causal analysis are inconclusive. On the one hand, several papers find that cultural and natural heritage are important determinants of tourism demand (see [8–10], or [11], among others). On the other hand, another group of papers concludes that it is not possible to find a clear positive relationship between cultural heritage sites and tourism (i.e., [12,13], and [14]). Differences in results are likely due to differences in countries, periods, variables, and model specifications. Indeed, many of these papers focus on the effect of WHS on tourist arrivals to a specific country. Several critiques have emerged in the literature regarding the causal identification of the WHL related to the selection issue. On the one hand, being on the WHL is a conditional recognition proposed by a national government to UNESCO for an existing cultural or natural resource. If the newly recognized site is actually a pull factor for tourists, then the actual recognition will not have a great impact on posterior tourism demand. Contrarily, the motivations for the UNESCO recognition may not always be to promote tourism, but rather to protect and conserve the sites, and perhaps even to limit the numbers of visits [12]. Under these scenarios, we should not find any positive effect on tourism growth due to the WHL.

To evaluate what the tourism losses attributed to the destruction of WHS in conflict-stricken economies from the MENA region would be, we focus on Arab states that experienced the so-called “Arab Spring” episodes of social unrest in 2011. UNESCO’s list of sites in danger is disproportionately composed of sites in these countries. We use our model to simulate various scenarios at the

Table 1
World Heritage Sites by UNESCO (2016).

	WHS	%	States	%
Africa	90	8.6%	34	17.4%
Arab States	81	7.7%	19	9.7%
Asia and the Pacific	245	23.3%	39	20.0%
Europe and North America	497	47.2%	70	35.9%
Latin America and the Caribbean	137	13.0%	33	16.9%
Other	2			
Total	1,052		195	

country level so as to ascertain what the losses in terms of tourism demand would be.

2. Research aim

The aim of the empirical analysis is to explore the effect of current conflicts in the MENA region in order to evaluate potential tourism losses attributed to the damage or eradication of cultural heritage. From a methodological point of view, we proceed in two stages: first, we estimate a tourism demand equation through a gravity model of bilateral tourism flows to ascertain the effect of WHS in a tourist destination country; second, we predict what tourism losses would be attributed to the destruction of cultural heritage sites in those countries. An advantage of this methodology is that it allows us to simultaneously control for other possible shocks that affect tourism demand either at the destination or origin country, or a particular destination–origin pair. We compare the estimated effect of the number of WHS on Arab countries experiencing conflicts with the effect over two control groups that also possess a great number of WHS: the Arab states that did not directly experience AS upheavals in 2011 and non-Arab Mediterranean countries.

3. World Heritage lists and conflicts at the MENA region

3.1. World Heritage sites

The World Heritage Site distinction is awarded by UNESCO to places on the planet that have exceptional cultural or natural importance. The purpose of these recognitions is to catalog, preserve, and publicize sites with an exceptional value for human heritage. In exchange for UNESCO recognition, governments commit in some way to preserving the sites. So, at the end of the day, a WHS recognition is a signal of the quality of a tourist attraction, and the publicity it generates is of great value. On the other hand [15], point out that inclusion on the list might have negative consequences, such as, reduced protection for sites not on the World Heritage List, the potential deterioration of the sites by excessive tourism, and the creation of an attractive target for destruction in wars and by terrorists. Moreover [16], hold that in some cases the decision to include a site on the UNESCO list is not objective since it can be influenced by factors such as having a seat on the World Heritage Committee.

As it is shown in Table 1, in the year 2016 there were a total of 1052 world heritage sites distributed across 165 countries.¹ Of these, 814 (77%) are places of cultural interest although there are also 203 natural and 35 mixed sites. Geographically, 497 sites are located in Europe and North America, followed by Asia and the Pacific with 245 sites, Latin America and the Caribbean with 137, Africa with 90, and Arab countries with 81. When looking at the number of states with at least one WHS distinction, Europe and

¹ There are 34 transborder WHS which cover multiple states.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8965298>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8965298>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)