Chapter 8
Assessing the Use of Archaeological Sites as Cultural Tourism Resources: The Case of Segóbriga (Spain)

Nuria Huete-Alcocer
University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

María Pilar Martínez-Ruiz
University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

Víctor Raúl López-Ruiz
University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

ABSTRACT
This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of archaeological sites and the value they represent to the field of cultural tourism. Specifically, this chapter discusses the suitable means of studying and managing archaeological sites, which represent tangible examples of cultural tourism. Managed properly, such sites may attract a larger number of visitors and thereby contribute to the region’s socioeconomic development. In order to illustrate this line of research, this analysis will focus on one archaeological site in particular, namely the Archaeological Park of Segóbriga in the province of Cuenca, Spain. More specifically, the chapter reviews survey data collected over several years by related public institutions. The findings lend support to several measures that may improve the management of such sites in the context of cultural tourism. The most important of these is the dissemination and promotion of information about the site through WOM and eWOM.

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INTRODUCTION

As one of the main economic activities in the world, tourism has become an important source of income for many countries (Su & Lin, 2014), as well as a creator of jobs in various service industries (Yang, Lin, & Han, 2010). This is particularly true in Spain, which has become one of the world’s most important tourism powers—placing third just behind France and the United States (World Tourism Organization, 2016). Spain not only possesses many attractions, but also rivals China and Italy in terms of the number of goods it produces (UNESCO, 2015). Meanwhile, Spain’s position on the World Heritage list (a marketing tool used by national tourism campaigns to attract a large number of visitors; Li, Wu, & Cai, 2008) speaks to the richness of its historical and archaeological heritage (Boto, 2016). As cultural tourism has gradually become pivotal to a destination’s attractiveness (McKercher, Ho, & Du Cros, 2005), Spain has outpaced many other countries in leveraging its cultural resources, becoming the second-most important country for this type of tourism (Santos & Meléndez, 2016). Case in point: In 2015, the total volume of visitors to Spain exceeded 68 million foreigners, a year-on-year increase of 4.9% (INE, 2016).

In short, culture constitutes an important part of tourism, as it increases the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations (Hennessey, Yun, & MacDonald, 2014; Pal, 2015). Indeed, several studies have shown that tourists are particularly drawn to destinations with a richer cultural or natural heritage (e.g., Bille & Schulze, 2006; Cooke & Lazzaretti, 2008; Su & Lin, 2014; Yang et al., 2010). Through cultural tourism, visitors gain insight into the history, culture and way of life of other regions of the world (Pal, 2015). As cultural tourism gains ever more importance (Chen & Chen, 2010), it is worth noting that the fastest-growing places are those that offer tourists a glimpse into both the tangible and intangible sides of cultural experience (Datta et al., 2015).

Considering the above, this work places special emphasis on a cultural destination – Segóbriga – that possesses a unique archaeological heritage. Located in the province of Cuenca, Segóbriga is one of the five archaeological parks of Castilla - La Mancha. Having ascended as a cultural destination in recent years, this area serves as a useful case study in how tourism management can leverage archaeological sites as tangible cultural resources. Through proper management, such sites may attract more visitors and thereby contribute to the socio-economic development of the areas involved. In order to illustrate this line of research, this chapter will explore how the archaeological park of Segóbriga can act as an important historical resource for cultural tourism in that area.

BACKGROUND

In order to accomplish the above goal, we need to first establish some conceptual distinctions regarding cultural tourism and, more specifically, archaeological heritage.

Cultural tourism emerged in the early 1990s, originally for the benefit of elite clientele, but was eventually generalized as an alternative to mass tourism that values the culture of the visited community (Jovicic, 2016). Silberberg (1995) offered one of the first and most enduring definitions of cultural tourism: namely, as “visits by people outside the host community motivated in their entirety or partly by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle offerings, heritage of a community, region, group or institution” (p. 361). Similarly, Wall and Mathieson (2006) defined cultural tourism in terms of “tourists who experience and have contact with a host population and its cultural expressions, experiencing the uniqueness of culture, Heritage and the characters of its place and people” (p. 261; see also Lynch...