



Improving the Quality and Sustainability in Heritage Tourism in OIC Countries

CONCEPT & METHODOLOGY

Prof. Gurel Cetin
Istanbul University, Türkiye
gurelc@Istanbul.edu.tr



Introduction



Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)



- Four Continents
- 57 member states

It distinguishes itself with varied cultural and natural heritage tourism attractions

Tourism in OIC Nations



- OIC nations hosted 233 million international travelers in 2023
- Share of global traveler arrivals from 13% in 2019 to 18%
- Tourism revenues grew from \$238 billion to \$250 billion
- Global share increase from roughly 14% to 17% over the same period

Tourism in OIC Nations



Most tourists visiting OIC destinations are also leisure tourists.

Tourism Motivations

Leisure Travelers

Sunlust (Holiday) Tourism

Wanderlust (Heritage) Tourism

Business Travelers

Meetings

Incentives

Conventions

Events



Wanderlust & Heritage Tourism

What is Wanderlust?

- A strong desire to travel and explore new cultures and places

Connection with Heritage Tourism

- Wanderlust tourists are drawn to **unique cultural and historical heritage**
- Motivated by deep, meaningful experiences with local traditions

Respectful Travelers

- More likely to **value and respect** local culture
- Appreciate authentic interactions with local communities



Heritage Tourism

«an inheritance from the past that is valued in the present and is hoped to be passed on to future generations»

Core Focus

- Emphasizes **history, culture, and traditions**
- Attracts tourists seeking **education and cultural enrichment**

Complementary Role

- Supports other travel motivations (e.g., **MICE & sunlust tourism**)
- Many travelers are also interested in **local heritage** during their trips



Heritage tourism

Destination-Specific Appeal

- Cultural heritage assets are unique to each location
- Facilitate branding of the destination

Willingness to Pay

- Heritage tourists are **less price-sensitive**
- Spend more compared to **sun-lust tourists**

Tourism Share

- Heritage tourism accounts for **36% of global tourism volume**



Heritage Tourism

Traveler Interests

- Growing demand for:
 - Cultural and natural heritage
 - Arts and local traditions
 - Festivals, historical sites, and authentic experiences

Global Trends

- Rising **middle class** in emerging economies
- Increased demand for **experiential travel**

Tourists seek **meaningful connections** with destinations through community and cultural engagement.



Heritage Tourism

Preservation & Sustainability

- Encourages protection of cultural and environmental heritage
- Generates sustainable sources of income

Community Impact

- Fosters meaningful interaction between tourists and local people
- Supports the local economy

Pride & Awareness

- Inspires people to value their history, nature, and traditions
- Promotes respectful and enriching experiences through cultural connection



Challenges of 3S (Sun, Sea, Sand) Tourism

Heritage tourism offers a more sustainable alternative to mass tourism and should be prioritized in tourism strategies!

With 3S Tourism is;

- Overuse of natural resources
- Inadequate infrastructure & pollution
- Overcrowding in tourist hotspots
- Commercialization of local traditions
- Cultural erosion
- Seasonal nature → unstable employment
- Income fluctuation for local communities
- Destruction of natural landscapes
- Loss of ecological and aesthetic value

Heritage Tourism

UNESCO divides heritage tourism resources into two main categories:

- **Tangible Heritage**
- **Intangible Heritage**



Heritage Tourism

Tangible Heritage

Historic and Natural Heritage Assets:

- Archaeological landmarks
- Historical buildings & monuments
- Museums
- Sacred & religious sites
- National parks & natural settings



Appeals to: Tourists seeking direct, visual, and physical experiences

Heritage Tourism

Intangible Heritage

Living cultural expressions:

- Local cuisine
- Traditional arts & crafts
- Folklore, music, and dance
- Spiritual ceremonies & festivals
- Storytelling & community rituals



Appeals to: Tourists seeking interaction and cultural immersion

Heritage Tourism Potential in OIC Nations

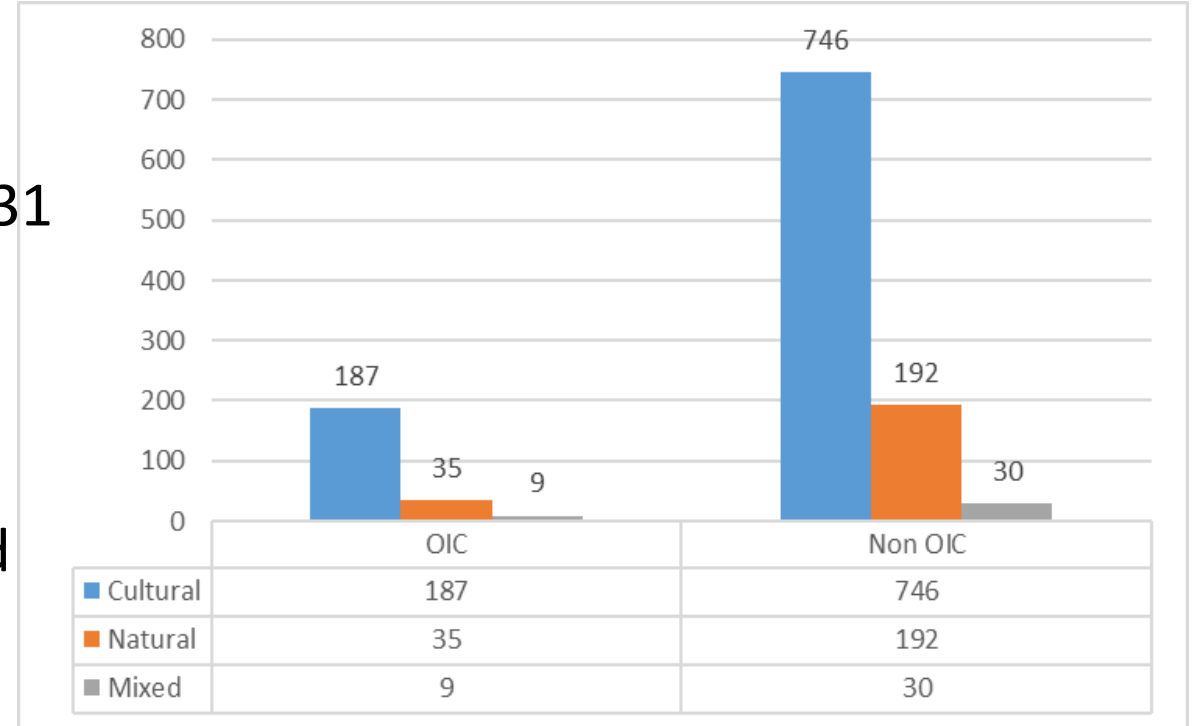


- OIC nations have considerable growth potential in heritage tourism
- Possess a competitive advantage over non-OIC destinations due to rich tangible & intangible cultural assets
- Authenticity strongly influences tourist satisfaction and loyalty to heritage tourism attractions, leading to increased intention to revisit and recommend
- Heritage tourism is potentially a key driver of economic growth in OIC countries

Heritage Tourism Potential in OIC Nations



- UNESCO World Heritage sites, approximately 231 (19%) were located in OIC nations.
- Among them, 187 are classified as cultural heritage sites, 35 are natural heritage sites, and nine are hybrids of both categories



Challenges in Heritage Tourism across OIC Countries



- Underdeveloped infrastructure, visitor facilities, and site management
- Limited investment & funding for heritage preservation
- Low share of global tourism revenues despite rich heritage assets
- Need for strategic action to enhance sustainability and improve quality
- Weak planning, site governance, and coordination
- Ineffective branding and promotion of heritage destinations
- Natural disasters, human impacts and environmental degradation which threatens long-term site integrity

Heritage Tourism Sustainability

Environmental

Pollution

Climate Change

Floods & Erosion

Wildfires

Earthquakes

Industrial and urban development

Tragedy of commons



Heritage Tourism Sustainability

Social

Authenticity

Exploitation of local populations and traditions

Mass consumption

Changing Life Styles

Migration

Wars & Terrorism

Community Involvement & Capacity Building



Heritage Tourism Sustainability

Economic

Agricultural, industrial and urban pressures

Commercialization

Gentrification

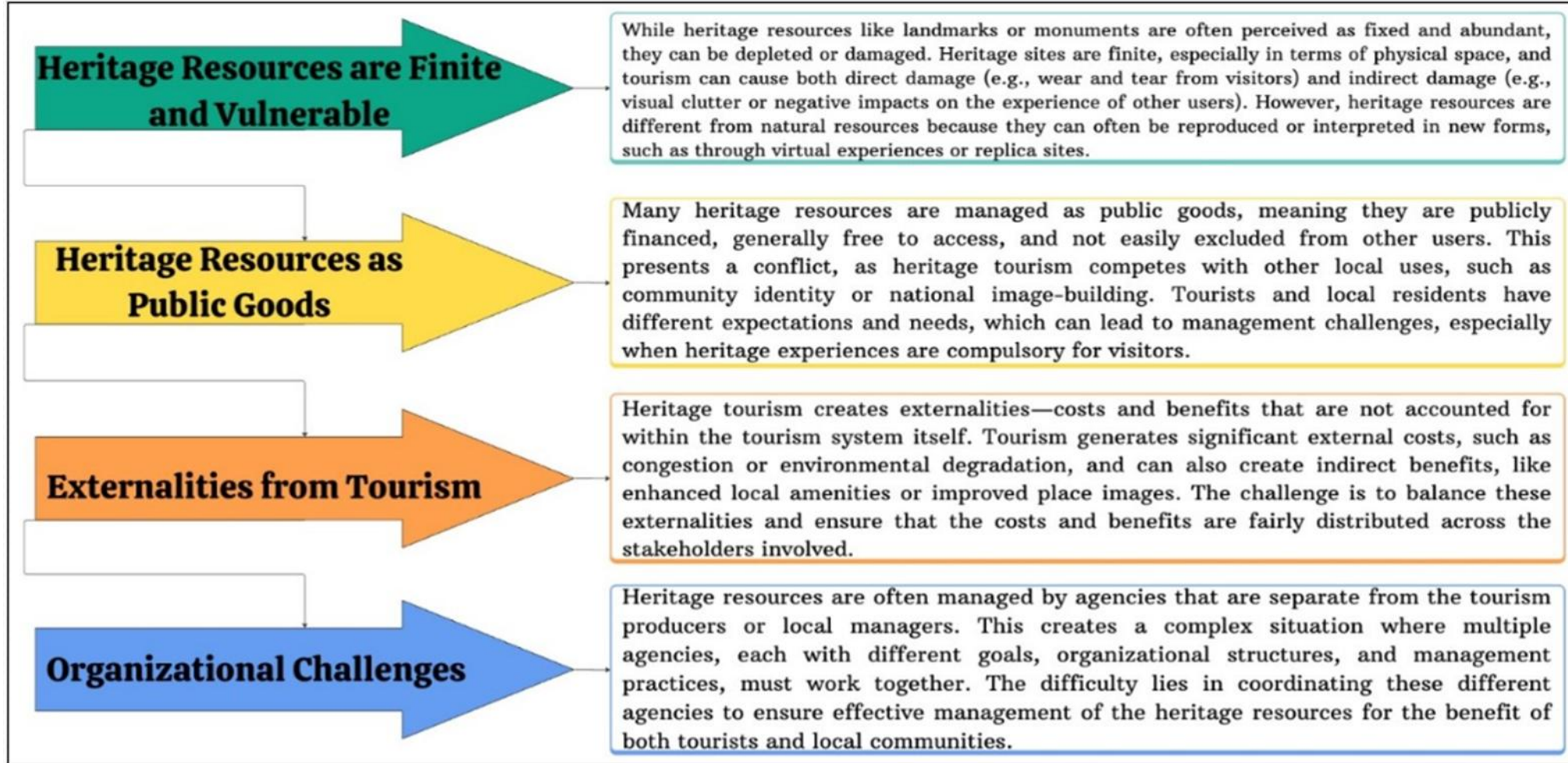
Contribution to local economy

Funding



Heritage Tourism

Sustainability Challenges



Heritage Tourism

Structures & Stakeholders

Managing Tourist Activity

Balancing tourism development with conservation

Stakeholder involvement

- Local Community
- Tourism industry
- Government

Methodology

- Mixed Methods – Sequential Design
 - Secondary Data
 - Research Articles
 - Reports
 - Policy Documents
 - Primary Data
 - Qualitative
 - Interviews
 - Focus Groups
 - Quantitative Survey
 - Benchmark Case Studies
 - Desk based
 - Field-visit



Methodology – Secondary Data

- Research Articles
 - WoS & Scopus Databased
 - Keywords: Heritage tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism governance
- Reports
 - OIC
 - COMCEC
 - SESRIC
 - UNWTO
 - WTTC
 - UNESCO
 - ICOMOS



Methodology – Interviews

- Semi-structured
- 20 heritage tourism experts from OIC countries
- Questions
 - Heritage assets inventory
 - Heritage tourism product development
 - Sustainability and improvement of heritage tourism resources
 - Strategies for future development of heritage tourism
- Transcriptions & Thematic Content Analysis



Methodology – Survey



- 150 heritage tourism experts in OIC countries
- Items
 - Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), (Bricker & Schultz, 2011)
 - Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale (SUS-TAS; Hsu et al., 2020)
 - Heritage Experience Scale (Su et al., 2020)
 - Tourism Governance Scorecard (TGS; Vila et al., 2010)
 - Service Quality (SERVQUAL Model; Parasuraman et al., 1988)
- Descriptive and Inferential Analysis

Methodology – Focus Group

- 2 Focus Groups 8 heritage tourism experts each
- Validate Findings
- Capture additional stakeholder perspectives
- Create Final Policy Recommendations



Methodology – Case Countries

- 5 Case Countries
 - 3 Desk based (Türkiye, Egypt and Italy)
 - 2 Field study (Indonesia and Senegal)
- Review of national reports
- Integration of Empirical data
- Benchmark Analysis



Thank You

