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UNESCO World Heritage Site label and sustainable tourism in Europe: a user-generated content analysis

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ABSTRACT

Officially branding local heritage through recognised labels is a strategy that regions can use to promote economic development. Regions increasingly seek more sustainable tourism development, which can be captured by the quality of local tourist service development. This paper examines whether the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) label is associated with local tourism development of a higher quality and offers the first comparative study across European regions. Using TripAdvisor reviews of over 38,000 European locations, our results reveal a positive correlation between WHS labelling and measures of perceived quality and breadth of local tourist services.

KEYWORDS

UNESCO WHS; label; brand; tourism development; cultural heritage; UGC

JEL O3, L1, L8, Z3

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1. INTRODUCTION

Place branding has long been a strategy for regional development. Different intellectual property rights (IPRs) have served place branding, with trademarks often playing a key role (Castaldi, 2023; Grimbert et al., 2023). The outcome of a place-branding process, which can be underpinned by a trademark or other forms of IPRs, is often a recognisable visual cue, logo or promising message intended to reduce information asymmetries between supply and demand (Castaldi & Mendonça, 2022). One of the best-known examples of place-related brands is the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) label, which is a sign that can be used by places conditional on a stringent application procedure and is argued to be a 'denomination of authenticity' and, due to this, able to attract (a specific type of) tourists (Adie, 2017; Canale et al., 2019; Castaldi & Mendonça, forthcoming; Cuccia et al., 2016).

Developing the conditions for building place brands is a complex process. Places are formed by a plurality of actors, products and services that need to be incorporated into place branding efforts (Buhalis, 2000; Govers, 2011). Research underscores the pivotal role played by locally rooted stakeholders, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and residents, in shaping place-based branding practices (Braun et al., 2013). Neglecting to properly involve and acknowledge these stakeholders can greatly hinder the translation of intangible aspects of a place – such as its culture, heritage, beliefs, identity and experiences – into an effective branding strategy. The support and insights provided by the local community are vital in this regard (Braun et al., 2013; Govers, 2011).

Branding efforts might disproportionately benefit select local stakeholders while potentially yielding negative consequences for others. SMEs and residents are especially vulnerable to both the bright and often unintended dark effects of place branding (Kavaratzis, 2017; Scholvin, 2021). In fact, preventing adverse consequences of place branding practices is a crucial prerequisite for a place or region to fully realise its broader strategic goals (Cleave et al., 2016). Within tourism, particular attention should be paid to the need to develop brands in line with the achievement of broader regional development goals that go beyond merely attracting more visitors (Buhalis, 2000; Gartner, 2014). An increasingly critical aspect of assessing the value of destination branding strategies is their alignment with sustainable tourism goals (Maheshwari et al., 2011; Mitropoulou & Spilanis, 2020). This includes not only preserving cultural heritage and safeguarding the local economy but also enhancing the tourist

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experience by connecting it with the place and its heritage in a meaningful way (Gartner, 2014; Hereźniak & Anders-Morawska, 2021). Herein, the diversity of tourist products and services, as well as satisfaction with these offerings, are emerging as pivotal indicators of branding success and sustainable tourism development (Séraphin et al., 2019; UNWTO, 2018).

Considering these factors, it becomes crucial to thoroughly examine the ability of places or regions to develop place branding strategies that align with both local needs and sustainable regional development pathways (Gilboa & Jaffe, 2021; Golestaneh et al., 2022). While studies are increasingly addressing this issue, the research focuses on a limited number of case studies, which mainly concern exceptional and highly specific places (Hanna et al., 2021; Perkins et al., 2020). These single-site case studies find promising results on the importance of stakeholder alignment processes, brand communication and marketing, identifying common assets and brand messaging, and efforts to measure brand success and equity. However, criticism arises from the difficulty in discerning commonalities or discrepancies in the fundamental factors influencing place branding (Sadler et al., 2016) and the substantial research gap in comparing place branding practices across various locations and regions (Boisen et al., 2018; Wäckerlin et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2021).

This paper aims to offer insights into how place branding can promote sustainable tourism development across various European regions. This is done by studying places in Europe that went through a well-known and sought-after place branding process utilising a highly recognisable label, which is the acquisition of the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) designation (Adie, 2017; Canale et al., 2019; Cuccia et al., 2016). Places protected by the World Heritage Convention and inscribed on the official World Heritage List are identified by the official emblem and associated logos owned and issued by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2011). These emblems and logos, for instance, are employed in road signs, flags, websites and various other communication channels. This utilisation ensures the proper reporting and promotion of the World Heritage status both on-site and across diverse communication channels.

The combination of the uniqueness of the WHS label, the comprehensive branding efforts that prelude a WHS designation (Della Lucia & Franch, 2017), rising concerns over the impact of (over)tourism on places and their communities (Caust & Vecco, 2017), and a lack of consensus on the impact of a WHS designation on tourism development (Canale et al., 2019) contribute to the relevance of specifically studying the interrelation between the WHS label and the sustainable development of tourism. To examine whether the underlying branding practices of places showcasing the WHS label are associated with more sustainable tourism development, this paper explores to what extent tourists' behaviour and experiences differ between places with a WHS label and without. This is done by looking both at how tourists evaluate their experiences and at the diversity of experiences they can choose from and then evaluate.

The analysis of the evaluation of tourists' experiences can indicate whether the WHS label is associated with a high-quality tourist experience, in terms of diversity and satisfaction. The analysis of the diversity of the activities that tourists undertake gives an indication of whether the label is associated with a specific focus of tourists on the WHS itself, or whether it stimulates tourists to explore the wider offering of products and services within a place. This is examined by analysing user-generated content (UGC) from the platform TripAdvisor, which is collected for the entire European Union at the level of local administrative units (LAUs, also known as NUTS 4). Analysing UGC is a promising approach for studying the local effects and different impacts of supralocal developments on a large scale (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015). According to Acuti et al. (2018), UGC is an information source transmitted and used by consumers who intend to communicate with each other and share information about products, brands, services, and places. Thus, this user-generated information can be valuable both on the demand side, such as in enhancing place knowledge (Keller, 1998), and for understanding the quality of the offer (tourist experience), as well as for the development of territorial marketing strategies through co-creation (Skinner, 2018).

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first empirical test conducted on the relationship between the WHS label and tourist experiences and behaviour on a local scale, covering the whole European Union. Other studies have addressed the impact of WHS labelling at the European scale using data at the regional NUTS 2 level (see, e.g., Panzera et al., 2021) or the more local NUTS 3 level for studying the impact at the national scale (see, e.g., Canale et al., 2019). This work takes into account suggestions (see, e.g., Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017) to carry out empirical studies at a more granular geographical scale and with greater coverage for comparative analysis.

The study investigates the relationship between the WHS labelling and different aspects of the tourist experience, including the tourists' overall evaluation of the destination, the tourists' evaluation of each specific type of facility/service located in the destination, and the diversification of the tourist offer by developing a tourist diversity index based on the TripAdvisor reviews. By employing various regression models, the study finds that the WHS labelling is significantly associated with a higher (better) evaluation of the overall offer, meaning that when LAUs have a WHS label, a higher overall evaluation of the facilities and/or services becomes more likely. Examining in detail the relationship between the WHS label and each specific type of services/facilities, the results show that having a WHS label is significantly associated with a higher evaluation of most of the service sectors, with a stronger correlation in the cultural sector. However, an opposite trend was detected for the transportation sector, meaning transportation services were evaluated with a lower score in LAUs with a WHS label. Lastly, the

study finds a positive and significant association between WHS labelling and the diversification of the tourist offer.

2. UNESCO WHS LABEL AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Characteristics and function of the UNESCO WHS label

The WHS label is awarded to cultural and natural heritage sites that are considered of outstanding universal value by an international committee of experts. The inclusion in the World Heritage List is governed by the World Heritage Convention, adopted by UNESCO in 1972 and ratified by over 195 nations to date. With approximately 1199 sites currently listed, the WHS label demonstrates significant global popularity. First and foremost, the WHS label was designed to identify, protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage around the world (UNESCO, 2014). In addition to its potential for contributing to heritage conservation (King & Halpenny, 2014), a WHS label is seen both in official UNESCO documentation and in policy circles as a denomination of authenticity, an indicator of the attractiveness of places, and, as such, a sought-after element of place branding (Adie, 2017; Canale et al., 2019; Cuccia et al., 2016). More recently, UNESCO has also stressed that WHS status, when used appropriately, may have a substantial influence on the destination's economic development while also adhering to the principles of sustainability (UNESCO, 2014).

Ryan and Silvanto (2009) and Hall and Piggin (2003) emphasise how the WHS label has essentially become a brand. While commonly perceived as an endorsement or seal of approval, the WHS label shares similar characteristics with traditional brands (Ryan & Silvanto, 2011). Like a brand, it signifies a commitment to differentiation, uniqueness and value, aligning with Kotler and Gertner's (2002) notion of brands as promises of value. This feature helps destinations stand out in the tourism industry and reassure potential tourists of their authenticity and excellence (Adie, 2017; Caust & Vecco, 2017; Panzera et al., 2021). Hence, the label lowers transaction costs and lessens information asymmetries, in a similar way that brands do (Ramello & Silva, 2006). The brand aspect of WHS is further solidified by the requirement for sites to develop a comprehensive, long-term management plan to obtain the WHS label. Notably, the involvement of a diverse range of local stakeholders in crafting this management plan is a crucial aspect in the evaluation of nominated sites (Della Lucia & Franch, 2017). The inclusion of various stakeholders, such as policymakers, residents, businesses in the tourism sector and heritage organisations, plays a pivotal role in shaping a collective sense of WHS label appropriation.

Formally, the WHS label operates as a brand represented by the label 'UNESCO World Heritage' and its emblem, the WHS symbol (King & Halpenny, 2014). Effective labels, like UNESCO World Heritage, carry positive connotations, are memorable, and convey the brand's essence (Wheeler, 2006), while symbols serve as memory triggers, promoting recognition and recall (Schmidt & Ludlow, 2002). Adie (2017) discusses in detail the complex contractual relationship between WHS sites, State Parties signatories of the UNESCO convention and UNESCO itself. The contracts ensure the lasting quality of the WHS label, akin to preserving a trademark, by maintaining its expected quality levels and the distinctive characteristic of outstanding universal value. Over time, WHS status has therefore evolved into a quality assurance measure, functioning as a 'stamp of authenticity' for tourism heritage and a platform for showcasing national heritage. While not formally registered as a trademark for commercial purposes, the WHS status operates similarly, simplifying tourism selection through certification of authenticity and quality. Additionally, the World Heritage Convention and registered ownership rights – also including copyrights, see UNESCO, 2011 – ensure the legal protection of WHSs, preventing unauthorised use of this prestigious recognition. In the following pages, the issue of authenticity has been addressed, drawing from recent reviews in tourism studies conducted by Rickly et al. (2023). They highlight two visions of authenticity: one related to the materiality of tourism (heritage sites and attractions) and the other to the tourism experience (quality perception of the visit), revealing the intricate relationships between tourists, sites, and facilities within destinations.

The characteristics of the UNESCO-States parties relationship suggest that what is at stake is not only heritage conservation. Increasingly, State Parties recognise the broader potential of WHS recognition, fuelling their eagerness to join and capitalise on its benefits. The role of the brand transcends acknowledging the exceptional universal value of heritage sites; it serves as a catalyst for a diverse network of exchange values, fostering global relationships, strategic partnerships and a dynamic marketplace for trade and exchange (Meskell, 2015). Meskell (2015) likens WHS to commodities mobilising national and international flows and views the UNESCO Convention as a powerful mechanism enabling countries and communities to showcase their historic achievements globally.

2.2. WHS and tourism

The WHS label clearly offers direct opportunities for local business activities (Buckley, 2018; Lak et al., 2020). Buckley (2018) found that, fuelled by increased tourism demand, the inclusion of a place in the WHS list can have an impact on local economies due to increases in land values, changes in systems granting permits to businesses such as tour operators, and overall new business opportunities. However, it remains unclear whether the WHS label automatically and autonomously triggers an increase in attractiveness (Ryan & Silvanto, 2014) and/or sustainable tourism development (Can et al., 2021; Falk & Hagsten, 2021).

Empirical literature offers inconclusive evidence on the causal relationship between WHS status and increases in tourist inflows (Canale et al., 2019; Yang & Lin, 2011).

Panzera et al. (2021) found, in a European study, that tourists are willing to travel a longer distance to visit WHSs. However, Cellini (2011) and Cuccia et al. (2016) did not find a positive relationship between WHSs and increasing tourist numbers – and even found opposite effects. Cuccia et al. (2016) showed, for example, that the WHS label can jeopardise the competitiveness and performance of places by detecting a negative effect on the occupancy rate of accommodations. Volgger and Taplin (2022), using a randomised experiment to test the causal effects of National Parks (NPs) and WHS designation, find that NP and WHS declarations significantly increase the likelihood of visits, but the added value of declaring a WHS above NP is insignificant on a domestic tourism market.

Several studies provide possible explanations for the claim that a WHS label does not necessarily lead to an upsurge in the influx of visitors. Studying the content of TripAdvisor reviews, Koufodontis and Gaki (2022) found that for European urban destinations, tourists had a fairly low awareness of the presence of WHSs. Stoleriu et al. (2019), applying a similar methodology, found the same for a natural WHS in Romania. This raises questions about whether the WHS label is effective in decreasing information asymmetries for (prospective) visitors. Adie et al. (2018) went a step further by arguing the existence of a placebo effect, as politicians and entrepreneurs highly value the positive effects of being included among WHSs, even though empirical evidence is lacking. While expectations of increasing visitor numbers might not always match reality, the reference to a placebo-effect nevertheless highlights the presence of downstream efforts by stakeholders to acquire the WHS label. These efforts are significant as they could facilitate the formation of important collaborations and networks between interested parties, capable of enhancing and stimulating local creativity and the tourist offer (Cellini & Cuccia, 2016). The effects could thus lead to what Mendonça (2014) describes as a 'soft innovation' associated with the use of trademarks in general.

On the demand side, the WHS label is believed to be distinctive and capable of reaching specific market segments composed of highly-educated tourists looking for a cultural experience (Ryan & Silvanto, 2014). These tourists are also willing to travel greater distances (Panzera et al., 2021), are likely to spend more time in a place (Ribaudo & Figini, 2017), and show a greater willingness to pay (Kim et al., 2018) compared to other tourist segments. Other positive effects may relate to how tourists visit a place and whether their behaviour benefits the place, for example, through the variety of activities they engage in (Poria et al., 2011). Positive effects can also concern the level of satisfaction of tourists with their visit experience (Pérez Gálvez et al., 2021).

Visitor satisfaction, denoting the degree to which an experience evokes positive feelings (Rust & Oliver, 1994), profoundly influences the entire visitor journey. Its impact extends to the consumption of products and services, destination preferences and the inclination to revisit (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Reisinger and Turner (2012) emphasise that on-site satisfaction assessments often combine pre-travel expectations with post-travel experiences. This satisfaction significantly fuels positive word-of-mouth, shaping customer loyalty and retention (Trono et al., 2021). A gratifying travel experience propels tourists to return to the destination, share favourable information and recommend it to others (Yoon & Uysal, 2005), thereby contributing substantially to the destination's positive image (Dhankhar & Singh, 2014).

Works by Nguyen and Cheung (2014) and Poria et al. (2006), underscore that visitors actively engage with WHSs, gaining a unique understanding of cultural heritage through immersive experiences. There is evidence that WHSs are associated with higher levels of satisfaction in visits (Antón et al., 2017; Bui & Le, 2016; Mehta, 2021; Santa-Cruz & López-Guzmán, 2017; Su et al., 2017), however limited to specific sites and without comparisons with sites not belonging to the WHS list. Conversely, other authors have also highlighted possible negative repercussions on the quality of visits deriving from the acquisition of the WHS label (Caust & Vecco, 2017; Lo Piccolo et al., 2012). Particularly, both the pressure generated by the greater tourist attractiveness of WHS-labelled places and the responses of local businesses that expect an increase in tourist arrivals can have a negative impact on the conservation of heritage and can compromise its universal value due to commercialisation and (over)exploitation (Yang et al., 2010). Scarbrough (2021) raises awareness for the impact WHS labelling can have by causing 'overtourism'. To an extent, all this can have a negative effect on tourists' experience and evaluation of the destination (Mariani & Guizzardi, 2020) and compromise (subsequent) tourist choices (Bertocchi et al., 2021).

On the supply side, WHSs have been found to stimulate collaboration between tourism businesses, heritage organisations and policymakers (Della Lucia & Franch, 2017). The efforts to obtain and maintain the WHS label have also been found to spur diversity in the offering of goods and services (Buckley, 2018; Lak et al., 2020). Hence, there are clues suggesting that places with a WHS label are more likely to offer a range of heterogeneous tourist services, triggering an intersectoral diversification of supply (Buckley, 2018; Lak et al., 2020).

Overall, the combination of the effects of the WHS label on both the supply and demand side suggests that the label can represent a powerful tool for the successful valorisation of cultural heritage, with extensive socio-economic benefits for the wider local community (Poria et al., 2011). Policymakers have increasingly built narratives where such benefits are connected to SDG 8 (promote sustainable economic growth and decent work for all), as the type of local tourism development spurred by the WHS label is presented as being more sustainable, inclusive and diverse (EC-JRC, 2022; Labadi et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2014; UNWTO, 2018).

However, 'to date, research on the influences of the WHS inscription on tourists' evaluation of the destination hosting the WHS is unexpectedly virtually missing'

(Mariani & Guizzardi, 2020, p. 23). Moreover, Mariani and Guizzardi (2020) state that evidence on the actual presence of a watershed effect, which is the positive effect that the presence of a WHS has on tourist evaluations of the wider region, has not been examined in any systematic way.

This paper therefore aims to inform this discussion by providing a much-needed comparative study offering evidence for a large number of locations. We explore whether locations with a WHS label show more sustainable tourism development than sites without a WHS label, focusing on the experience and satisfaction of tourists (Buhalis, 2000; Jones et al., 2017; Mariani & Guizzardi, 2020; Yang & Lin, 2011).

To explore the relationship between the WHS label, tourist satisfaction and diversification of the tourism economy, this paper analyses user-generated content (UGC), in particular online reviews written by users and published on the platform TripAdvisor. Online reviews represent up-to-date data on how a destination is perceived, the behaviour of tourists and their profile (Rodríguez-Díaz & Espino-Rodríguez, 2018), exceeding the limits of official statistics, which are often not available on a local scale, are difficult to compare internationally and hold limited information on tourist satisfaction. TripAdvisor provides certified and valuable data (Xiang et al., 2018) that has been used in numerous studies on tourism, WHS and brand management (Silva et al., 2021). TripAdvisor reviews have been used to measure the level of success of place branding practices by analysing their content for brand awareness (Koufodontis & Gaki, 2022) and to get an insight into tourist experiences (Ganzaroli et al., 2017).

This paper proposes a study that investigates the relationship between the WHS label and various aspects of the tourist experience by using UGC data sources at the local level but covering the whole of the European Union. In particular, we have the following three specific objectives:

First, we examine the relationship between the WHS label and the quality of the overall evaluation of the destination. We expect a positive correlation between being labelled as a WHS and receiving high overall ratings on platforms such as TripAdvisor. This would suggest that the WHS label is associated with a better visitor experience and greater visitor satisfaction.

Second, we examine in detail the correlation between having a WHS label and the evaluation of each specific type of facility and/or service located on-site. We expect that not only facilities and services related directly to the WHSs receive high evaluations, but that in WHS labelled places, tourists are satisfied with each of the different subsectors (facilities and/or services, including shops, hotels, restaurants, etc., not related to the WHS).

Third, we examine if WHS labelling is correlated with greater diversification of the tourist offer. We expect to find evidence supporting the notion that destinations with a WHS label have a more diverse range of facilities and services and that the whole range is utilised by tourists. To measure this, we developed a tourist diversity index based on TripAdvisor reviews, taking into consideration the number of reviews received by each type of facility and/or service. A higher diversity value would indicate a more varied (diversified) utilisation of these facilities by tourists, extending beyond the WHS and related cultural attractions. Furthermore, we expect to find confirmation that having a more diversified tourism offer correlates with higher overall satisfaction with the destination.

3. DATA AND METHODS

We collected a database of all tourism facilities and services listed as 'Things to Do', 'Restaurants' and 'Hotels' on the TripAdvisor platform in the European Union, which gives a representation of the European tourism landscape up until March 2021. The database covers 38,902 cities and places in the European Union, with a total of 606,504 tourist facilities and services. These facilities and services are classified under 230 different categories by the TripAdvisor website. These categories have been merged into eleven macro-categories of tourist facilities and services, as follows:

1. for 'attractions' we created nine macro categories, being bars (e.g., nightlife), culture (e.g., museums), entertainment (e.g., theatres), landmarks (e.g., monuments), natural (e.g., parks), relax (e.g., Spas), shopping (e.g., crafts), tours (e.g., walking tours) and transport (e.g., shuttle services);
2. for 'restaurants' we combined all subcategories (e.g., pizzerias, fast food, etc.);
3. for 'accommodations' we combined all sub-categories (e.g., hotels, B&Bs, etc.).

The collected data reflects the presence of tourist facilities and services and gives an indication of how intensely they are used by visitors (through the number of reviews and distribution of these reviews over the different categories) and how they are evaluated (through the average score of the category, which ranges between 1 and 5). The database consists of a total of 45,949,995 reviews. These reviews were gathered at the city and location levels. In total, the database contained information on 38,902 cities and places across the 27 countries of the EU. We first geocoded all separate cities and places and then spatially aggregated this information to Eurostat's local administrative units (LAUs). ArcGis Pro 2.9 was used for all geocoding and spatial aggregations. While doing so, we deleted from the database all provinces and regions to avoid double-counting. We chose to use LAUs as they are compatible with the NUTS-division used by the European Union and Eurostat.

Finally, the database was enriched by the list of UNESCO WHSs (1382 places) located in the European Union. This list, provided by the UNESCO office in Venice, Italy, represents the cultural and natural heritage sites inscribed in the official UNESCO World Heritage List by 2021 and takes into account single sites (e.g., Alhambra in Granada, Spain), entire cities or territories

(e.g., Venice and its lagoon), and multi-location sites (e.g., the Flemish Beguinages in Belgium). Whether there was a WHS labelled site in the LAU area (or the place in its entirety was recognised as a WHS) was our main explanatory variable. We made a dummy variable that takes a value equal to one if the LAU area has a UNESCO WHS site or is recognised as such, and zero otherwise. No distinction between sub-categories (cultural like cities, buildings and monuments, temples and churches, or natural, such as natural parks and forests, deserts, lakes, islands, etc., or mixed, such as landscapes, mounts) of WHS or size (single site or an entire city) has been made in the database in order to observe the relationship with the UNESCO label as a whole.

In the first place, we investigate whether destinations with a WHS label are associated with high-quality experiences as a whole and subsequently at the level of separate facilities and/or services. Accordingly, we estimate the correlation between having the WHS label and the satisfaction of tourists. Satisfaction is measured by the average review score for the destination as a whole and for the different macro categories of facilities and/or services. These average scores range from 1 to 5. In order to obtain efficient and unbiased results in the possible presence of nonlinearity and heteroscedasticity, derived from the highly skewed values of the dependent variable of scores, we regroup the scores into three evaluation categories: low/bad (<3), average (3–4) and high/good (>4). This categorisation allows us to simplify the interpretation and policy implications of the results as well. Considering the ordered and categorical nature of our dependent variable (bad, average, good), we first relied on the ordered logit regression model (ologit). Although the ologit is appropriate for analysing ordered categorical variables, testing its key assumption is important to produce unbiased results. The main assumption is the proportionality assumption, which is that no input variable has a disproportionate effect on a specific level of the outcome variable, implying that the slope of the logistic function is constant for all category cutoffs. The proportionality assumption can be tested by the Brant test.[1] Unfortunately, according to the test (when considering the outcome of the overall score),[2] ologit turned out to be inappropriate for our analysis. Hence, we opted to use a generalised ordered logit model (gologit), which is an alternative when the proportionality assumption is violated.[3]

The gologit model can be expressed as:

$$P(Y_i > j) = g(X\beta_j) = \frac{exp(\alpha_j + X_i\beta_j)}{1 + [exp(\alpha_j + X_i\beta_j)]}, \quad j = 1, 2, \ldots, K-1 \tag{1}$$

where K is the number of categories of the ordinal outcome variable. From Equation (1) it can be settled that the probabilities that Y will take on each of the values 1, … ,K are equal to

$$\begin{aligned} P(Y_i = 1) &= 1 - g(X_i\beta_1) \\ P(Y_i = j) &= g(X_i\beta_{j-1}) - g(X_i\beta_j), \quad j = 2, \ldots, K-1 \\ P(Y_i = M) &= g(X_i\beta_{M-1}) \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

When the ordinal outcome variable has more than two categories, the gologit model is identical to a series of binary logistic regressions, where the categories of the outcome variable are dichotomised at each level: for example, if K = 4, then for j = 1, category 1 is contrasted with categories 2, 3 and 4; for j = 2, the contrast is between categories 1 and 2 versus 3 and 4, and so forth. The STATA's gologit2 command (Williams, 2006) was used for analysis. The method relies on estimating K-1 binary logistic regressions. Consequently, two binary equations were estimated, corresponding to the three levels of evaluation scores.

Next, our research aims to examine if destinations with WHS label have a more diverse offer of facilities and services and whether this diversity is utilised by tourists. We calculated a Tourism Diversity Index based on the distribution of reviews over the different macro categories in our TripAdvisor database. This index allows us to consider the diversity and range of tourist experiences available and assess how tourists engage with different tourism offerings in place with and without the WHS label. We use the number of reviews of each macro category as a proxy for the number of visits to various facilities and services within a LAU area. To calculate this index, we follow the guidelines provided by the EU Tourism Dashboard of the European Commission and specifically the Shannon Diversity Index (EC-JRC, 2022) which reflects the quantity and distribution of the different types of tourist economic activities present in a given region (de Almeida Rodrigues et al., 2018). This index allows us to understand visitor behaviour within a destination and explore whether it goes beyond the WHS itself.

The (Tourism) Diversity Index is constructed according to Equation (3):

$$D_i = -\sum_c p_i * log_2(p_i) \tag{3}$$

where probability p_i is given by (total number of reviews for each macro category c/total number of reviews for all macro categories) in municipality i. The diversity measure (D) is then the sum of the product of p_i and $log_2(p_i)$ by municipality i, of all the macro categories c.

We employ the Poisson regression[4] to test for the correlation between destinations with the WHS label and the Diversity Index and again the gologit model to test for the association between the Diversity Index and the overall evaluation of the tourism experience.

We also included a set of control variables (Arabadzhyan et al., 2021; Breiby et al., 2020; Campos et al., 2018; Mossberg, 2007) in our models, varying at the regional level (or NUTS3 level). The control variables are: GDP,

territorial susceptibility to natural hazards (TS) (obtained from the ESPON Programme – Klein et al., 2021), Holiday Climate Index (HCI) developed by the Copernicus Programme (Copernicus Programme, 2019) from the European Commission (used as a number of weather days in a year categorised as less than 'good condition' – fair or unfavourable – taking into account temperature, cloud, rain and wind conditions), and total economic damage (expressed in logarithmic scale in our models). We also add variables related to the landscape (He et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2016), indicating the presence of mountains, coasts and urbanisation levels. With respect to mountains, the original variable is a categorical one, where it takes 1 if more than 50% of the population lives in mountain areas, 2 if more than 50% of the surface is in mountain areas, 3 if more than 50% of the population and 50% of the surface are in mountain areas, and 4 takes 'other regions'. In our analysis, we create a dummy variable that takes one if the region falls into one of the first three categories and zero otherwise. Concerning the presence of coasts, the variable is originally classified into three categories: non-coastal, coastal and if more than 50% of the population lives within 50 km of the coastline. Similarly, we create a dummy variable, taking one if a region is one of the last two categories and zero otherwise. Finally, regarding urban areas, the original indicator is classified into three categories: predominantly urban, intermediate and predominantly rural. The variable we adopt is a dummy one, which takes one if a region is one of the first two categories and zero otherwise. We also include interaction terms between the WHS label and the different landscape dummies (mountainous, coastal and urban areas).

4. RESULTS

We start with the results of the correlation between the WHS label and the evaluation of the overall tourism offer as well as the single macro categories of services. Generally, the coefficients of the gologit model can be interpreted as coefficients from binary logit models, where the categories of the outcome variable are regrouped into two categories. The categories of our outcome variable are numbered 1 (low evaluation), 2 (average evaluation) and 3 (high evaluation). The first column of coefficients (category 1) can be interpreted as those from a binary logit regression where the dependent variable is coded as 1 vs 2 + 3, whereas the second column (category 2) as 1 + 2 vs 3. Positive coefficients mean that higher values on the predictors make higher values on the dependent variable more likely. In Table 1, we find that the presence of the WHS label is significantly associated with a better evaluation – higher evaluation – of the overall offer, meaning that when LAUs have a WHS site, a better (higher) overall evaluation of the facilities and/or services becomes more likely. The odds ratio results indicate that the presence of a WHS label is associated with higher odds of a better (higher) evaluation of the overall offer's score by 1.7 times on average, holding other variables constant. The presence of mountains and coasts is significantly associated with higher odds of a better evaluation of the overall offer's score by 1.56 and 1.36 times on average, respectively.

The findings in Table 2, Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5, demonstrate that the presence of the WHS label is significantly associated with a better evaluation – higher evaluation categories – of the cultural, accommodation, bars and touring sector services. The magnitude of the odds ratio reveals that the correlation is stronger for the cultural sector, followed by the accommodation sector, touring and bar sectors. For culture and accommodation, the coefficients are consistently positive but decline across cut-points. This means that the WHS label is positively associated with the rating categories, where the lowest evaluation category is less likely to be the case. In other words, destinations with WHS label are especially less likely to have an underperforming cultural and accommodation sector compared to destinations without a WHS site, and (but with a less strong association) these types of facilities and services are more likely to overperform. However, the transportation sector shows an opposite trend. While WHS labelling tends to be less likely to be associated with a low (bad) evaluation (OR = 1.2 > 1 in category 1), it is also less likely to be associated with a higher (better) evaluation (OR = 0.5 < 1 in category 2). While transport in destinations with a WHS label is not necessarily evaluated badly, it is not outstanding either.

Concerning the control variables, we can observe that the TS index is significantly associated with a worse score – lower evaluation categories – of the cultural and natural macro categories. This means that tourists in places susceptible to natural hazards are less satisfied with the offer of natural and cultural attractions in these places. The TS index is also more likely to be associated with a lower evaluation for the restaurant macro category. The presence of mountains or coasts is associated with a better evaluation score in the cultural, natural and landmark macro categories. In addition, the presence of mountains and coasts tends to be significantly associated with a higher (better) evaluation of both the accommodation and restaurant services. On the other hand, urbanisation is associated with a lower (worse) evaluation for both categories. Regarding the transportation sector, while we do not find a significant association between the presence of mountains or coasts and its evaluation, we find that urbanisation tends to be associated with a lower (worse) evaluation of transportation services. We report the p-value of the Wald test (while using Stata's 'autofit' command) to test for the parallel lines assumption for the final model for each outcome, where the results show an insignificant test statistic for all outcomes, indicating that the final model does not violate the proportional odds/parallel lines assumption.

We now discuss the results of the association between the presence of WHS labelled places in LAUs and the Diversity Index. Table 6 presents the results of the Poisson regression, measuring the correlation between the diversity measure and the WHS label in LAUs. The results confirm

Table 1. Gologit model: UNESCO presence and evaluation of the overall offer.

(1) Variables	(2) Scores (Cat. 1) Coeff.	(3) Scores (Cat. 2) Coeff.	(4) Scores (Cat. 1) OR	(5) Scores (Cat. 2) OR
UNESCO Presence	0.534**	0.534**	1.705**	1.705**
	(0.225)	(0.225)	(0.383)	(0.383)
GDP (log)	−0.146***	−0.146***	0.864***	0.864***
	(0.0172)	(0.0172)	(0.014)	(0.014)
TS	−0.445***	−0.445***	0.64***	0.64***
	(0.114)	(0.114)	(0.073)	(0.073)
HCI	0.0022***	0.0022***	1.002***	1.002***
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Tot. Economic Damage (log)	−4.124***	−1.659***	0.016***	0.19***
	(0.731)	(0.254)	(0.011)	(0.048)
Mountain	0.451***	0.451***	1.569***	1.569***
	(0.0366)	(0.0366)	(0.057)	(0.057)
UNESCO Presence#mountain	−0.0942	−0.0942	0.91	0.91
	(0.201)	(0.201)	(0.182)	(0.182)
Coast	0.314***	0.314***	1.369***	1.369***
	(0.0426)	(0.0426)	(0.058)	(0.058)
UNESCO Presence#coast	0.205	0.205	1.227	1.227
	(0.215)	(0.215)	(0.263)	(0.263)
Urban	0.517***	−0.156***	1.676***	0.855***
	(0.132)	(0.0431)	(0.221)	(0.036)
UNESCO Presence#urban	0.131	0.131	1.14	1.14
	(0.221)	(0.221)	(0.251)	(0.251)
Constant	5.755***	2.857***	315.74***	17.4***
	(0.223)	(0.193)	(70.29)	(3.351)
Observations	22,112	22,112	22,112	22,112
P-value (Wald test)	0.4706			

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. We report the Wald test of parallel lines assumption for the final model for each outcome, where an insignificant test statistic indicates that the final model does not violate the proportional odds/parallel lines assumption. The outcome is the mean of scores of all macro categories. Significant levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Coeff., coefficient; OR, odds ratio.

our expectation, where the coefficient shows a positive and significant correlation. The results of the Poisson coefficient can be interpreted as the following: LAUs with the WHS label have around 2.23 ($e^{0.805}$) times higher diversity compared to LAUs without WHS label. Looking at the control variables, GDP is positively associated with the Diversity Index. TS and total economic damage measures are negatively associated with diversification, as might be expected. While we can observe that mountains are negatively correlated with the Diversity Index, urban and coastal areas are positively associated with diversification. In Table 7 we find confirmation of a positive and significant relationship between the Diversity Index and a higher overall evaluation of facilities, suggesting that LAUs with major diversification of facilities make the services or facilities to be highly evaluated more likely.

Finally, we run the variance inflation factor (VIF) test to check for potential multicollinearity among the regressors. The values of the VIF range between 1 and 2, indicating that there is no detectable correlation between our explanatory variables. In Tables A.1, A.2, and A.3 (see Appendix in the supplemental data online), we show the descriptive statistics regarding the variables employed in our analysis. The estimation coefficients of the gologit model on the relationship between the UNESCO presence and the evaluation of the different sectors can be available upon request.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Through a comprehensive comparison of TripAdvisor reviews in over 38,000 places across Europe, this study presented results suggesting that destinations with a WHS label are associated with an enhanced visitor's experience. The overall results align with the role that a distinctive label has for linking supply and demand, which in this case is connecting (prospective) visitors to a place and its heritage (Gartner, 2014; Hereźniak & Anders-Morawska, 2021). In this sense, the label could be seen as a sign of approval, attracting visitors particularly interested in the local heritage. When the raised

Table 2. Gologit model: UNESCO presence and evaluation of the cultural, natural and landmark sectors (odds ratio).

Variables	(1) Cultural (Cat. 1)	(2) Cultural (Cat. 2)	(3) Natural (Cat. 1)	(4) Natural (Cat. 2)	(5) Landmark (Cat. 1)	(6) Landmark (Cat. 2)
UNESCO Presence	5.602***	2.025***	1.039	1.039	1.382	1.382
	(2.397)	(0.431)	(0.249)	(0.249)	(0.289)	(0.289)
GDP (log)	0.889***	0.889***	0.821***	0.821***	0.896***	0.896***
	(0.0170)	(0.0170)	(0.0217)	(0.0217)	(0.0210)	(0.0210)
TS	0.492***	0.492***	0.673**	0.673**	0.911	0.911
	(0.0618)	(0.0618)	(0.114)	(0.114)	(0.140)	(0.140)
HCI	1.001	1.001	0.996***	0.996***	0.997***	0.999*
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0005)	(0.0005)	(0.0010)	(0.0005)
Tot. Economic Damage (log)	0.668	0.668	0.659	0.659	0.222**	2.634***
	(0.196)	(0.196)	(0.297)	(0.297)	(0.155)	(0.981)
Mountain	1.081**	1.081**	1.226***	1.226***	1.291***	1.291***
	(0.0431)	(0.0431)	(0.0705)	(0.0705)	(0.0643)	(0.0643)
UNESCO Presence#mountain	0.848	0.848	1.017	1.017	0.721*	0.721*
	(0.159)	(0.159)	(0.216)	(0.216)	(0.133)	(0.133)
Coast	1.108**	1.108**	1.271***	1.271***	1.148**	1.148**
	(0.0502)	(0.0502)	(0.0825)	(0.0825)	(0.0635)	(0.0635)
UNESCO Presence#coast	1.030	1.030	1.039	1.039	0.898	0.898
	(0.198)	(0.198)	(0.225)	(0.225)	(0.170)	(0.170)
Urban	1.068	1.068	1.012	1.012	0.912	0.912
	(0.0515)	(0.0515)	(0.0719)	(0.0719)	(0.0552)	(0.0552)
UNESCO Presence#urban	1.166	1.166	1.685**	1.685**	1.599**	1.599**
	(0.238)	(0.238)	(0.392)	(0.392)	(0.328)	(0.328)
Constant	142.2***	14.64***	358.4***	32.40***	97.11***	5.461***
	(31.20)	(3.150)	(110.7)	(9.760)	(28.40)	(1.435)
Observations	13,753	13,753	7014	7014	8418	8418
P-value (Wald test)	0.4026		0.3019		0.9167	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. We report the Wald test of parallel lines assumption for the final model for each outcome, where an insignificant test statistic indicates that the final model does not violate the proportional odds/parallel lines assumption. Significant levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Cat., category.

expectations are met, this could lead to enhanced experiences, hence the positive evaluations found in this study.

Next to enhancing experiences, our findings confirm that the WHS label is positively associated with regional tourism development (Adie, 2017; Canale et al., 2019; Cuccia et al., 2016; Ryan & Silvanto, 2014). The analysis underscores the link between possessing a WHS label and heightened tourist satisfaction that extends beyond the attractions and services associated with the heritage. This observation points to a 'watershed effect' (Mariani & Guizzardi, 2020): the positive evaluation of the tourist experience does not concern the experience with the specific WHSs but involves the diversity of tourist offerings in the overall location. Both the place and (most of) the different types of facilities and services available in the place receive more positive evaluations for places including WHSs than places without. The evidence suggests that tourists are also satisfied with their experiences with accommodation, restaurants and other natural and cultural attractions outside the specific WHS site. The positive relationship between the WHS label and tourist evaluations also comes with a greater variety of facilities used by tourists compared to locations without a WHSs. Hence, tourists visiting WHS sites appear to show more widespread engagement with a range of local activities.

These findings provide new evidence that corroborates earlier case studies showing how being a WHS stimulates collaboration between stakeholders (Della Lucia & Franch, 2017) and diversification of the offer of products and services (Buckley, 2018; Lak et al., 2020). Our findings provide systematic comparative evidence for the capacity of WHS labelled places to be associated with high-quality experiences matching the expectations associated with the WHS label. Our findings indicate that the presence of a WHS label has the strongest positive and significant association with the evaluations of the two categories of cultural and natural heritage. Apparently, visitors valuate the value of cultural attractions such as museums and heritage sites better in destinations with a WHS label compared to other sites (Adie, 2017; Caust

Table 3. Gologit model: UNESCO presence and evaluation of the transportation, touring and entertainment sectors (odds ratio).

Variables	(1) Transport (Cat. 1)	(2) Transport (Cat. 2)	(3) Tour (Cat. 1)	(4) Tour (Cat. 2)	(5) Entertainment (Cat. 1)	(6) Entertainment (Cat. 2)
UNESCO Presence	1.201	0.578**	1.980**	1.980**	1.111	1.111
	(0.419)	(0.154)	(0.638)	(0.638)	(0.297)	(0.297)
GDP (log)	0.938*	0.938*	0.922***	0.922***	0.868***	0.868***
	(0.0361)	(0.0361)	(0.0269)	(0.0269)	(0.0251)	(0.0251)
TS	0.933	0.933	1.032	1.032	0.795	0.795
	(0.224)	(0.224)	(0.202)	(0.202)	(0.161)	(0.161)
HCI	1.002***	1.002***	1.002**	1.002**	0.999	1.001
	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	(0.0010)	(0.0007)
Tot. Economic Damage (log)	0.117***	0.117***	0.449	0.449	1.096	1.096
	(0.0797)	(0.0797)	(0.239)	(0.239)	(0.572)	(0.572)
Mountain	1.100	1.100	1.292***	1.292***	1.265***	1.265***
	(0.0917)	(0.0917)	(0.0818)	(0.0818)	(0.0838)	(0.0838)
UNESCO Presence#mountain	1.008	1.008	0.908	0.908	1.016	1.016
	(0.232)	(0.232)	(0.251)	(0.251)	(0.220)	(0.220)
Coast	0.951	0.951	1.509***	1.509***	1.025	1.025
	(0.0867)	(0.0867)	(0.107)	(0.107)	(0.0705)	(0.0705)
UNESCO Presence#coast	1.113	1.113	0.751	0.751	1.052	1.052
	(0.258)	(0.258)	(0.211)	(0.211)	(0.227)	(0.227)
Urban	0.830*	0.830*	0.807***	0.807***	0.860*	0.860*
	(0.0859)	(0.0859)	(0.0638)	(0.0638)	(0.0697)	(0.0697)
UNESCO Presence#urban	1.612*	1.612*	1.268	1.268	2.029*	0.958
	(0.409)	(0.409)	(0.391)	(0.391)	(0.768)	(0.250)
Constant	24.98***	4.510***	51.89***	6.817***	67.14***	5.840***
	(10.96)	(1.960)	(17.42)	(2.251)	(23.47)	(1.938)
Observations	3420	3420	8157	8157	4738	4738
P-value (Wald test)	0.4017		0.5435		0.7876	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. We report the Wald test of parallel lines assumption for the final model for each outcome, where an insignificant test statistic indicates that the final model does not violate the proportional odds/parallel lines assumption. Significant levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Cat., category.

& Vecco, 2017; Panzera et al., 2021). However, the appreciation for the offering of services and facilities in destinations with a WHS label extends beyond cultural resources and is also evident in another category of cultural experiences grouped in TripAdvisor under the 'tours' category. This could be explained by the importance of guidance and interpretative tours for making heritage and culture more accessible to tourists and connecting them to the place and its heritage.

While the study reveals that destinations with a WHS label tend to receive higher evaluations for cultural assets and services compared to other destinations, this does not apply to the transport sector. We found a significant but negative association, which could be attributed to the challenges faced by UNESCO destinations in making substantial infrastructural investments (Della Lucia & Franch, 2017; Wang & Gu, 2020). This also suggests a potential difficulty for UNESCO destinations to effectively manage the growing tourist flows, as they may have a limited capacity to manage congestion (Mariani & Guizzardi, 2020). This might highlight the challenge for WHS labelled destinations to manage essential services, while spreading tourist flows towards a broader range of activities.

Overall, our study underscores a significant relationship between the WHS label and local tourism development. Economic diversity and an enriched experience, encompassing a broader array of amenities and attractions within a location, serve as indicators of more sustainable regional tourism development (Jones et al., 2017; Poria et al., 2011; Yang & Lin, 2011). However, the literature on place branding cautions against potential disadvantages associated with well-known labels. Commodification of heritage, commercialisation of public goods, and homogenisation or Disneyfication are present dangers associated with increased tourist development (Kavaratzis, 2017; Séraphin et al., 2019). Some authors directly attribute the rise in so-called Disneyfication to the WHS

Table 4. Gologit model: UNESCO presence and evaluation of the relax, shopping and bars sectors (odds ratio).

Variables	(1) Relax (Cat. 1)	(2) Relax (Cat. 2)	(3) Shopping (Cat. 1)	(4) Shopping (Cat. 2)	(5) Bars (Cat. 1)	(6) Bars (Cat. 2)
UNESCO Presence	1.484	1.484	0.983	0.983	1.705*	1.705*
	(0.527)	(0.527)	(0.278)	(0.278)	(0.475)	(0.475)
GDP (log)	1.040	1.040	0.829***	0.829***	0.825***	0.825***
	(0.0448)	(0.0448)	(0.0259)	(0.0259)	(0.0239)	(0.0239)
TS	0.308***	0.812	0.300***	0.685*	0.388***	0.388***
	(0.129)	(0.227)	(0.106)	(0.142)	(0.0724)	(0.0724)
HCI	1.003***	1.003***	1.004***	1.004***	1.006***	1.003***
	(0.0009)	(0.0009)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	(0.0011)	(0.0007)
Tot. Economic Damage (log)	0.395	0.395	0.212***	0.212***	0.905	0.905
	(0.328)	(0.328)	(0.120)	(0.120)	(0.521)	(0.521)
Mountain	1.251**	1.251**	1.554***	1.554***	1.088	1.088
	(0.123)	(0.123)	(0.107)	(0.107)	(0.0689)	(0.0689)
UNESCO Presence#mountain	0.725	0.725	1.010	1.010	2.622**	1.010
	(0.198)	(0.198)	(0.249)	(0.249)	(1.171)	(0.216)
Coast	1.199	1.873***	1.138*	1.138*	1.387***	1.387***
	(0.212)	(0.204)	(0.0819)	(0.0819)	(0.0957)	(0.0957)
UNESCO Presence#coast	0.537**	0.537**	1.010	1.010	0.762	0.762
	(0.148)	(0.148)	(0.254)	(0.254)	(0.164)	(0.164)
Urban	1.004	1.004	0.719***	0.719***	1.116	0.847*
	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.0639)	(0.0639)	(0.160)	(0.0731)
UNESCO Presence#urban	1.208	1.208	1.724*	1.724*	0.887	0.887
	(0.420)	(0.420)	(0.489)	(0.489)	(0.240)	(0.240)
Constant	26.68***	0.717	478.9***	18.77***	97.11***	22.05***
	(16.94)	(0.336)	(264.9)	(6.786)	(33.58)	(7.058)
Observations	2318	2318	5965	5965	5020	5020
P-value (Wald test)	0.3562		0.4196		0.1964	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. We report the Wald test of parallel lines assumption for the final model for each outcome, where an insignificant test statistic indicates that the final model does not violate the proportional odds/parallel lines assumption. Significant levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Cat., category.

label (d'Eramo, 2014). Future research is necessary to understand which locations might have higher risks of experiencing severe downsides of WHS labelling. Addressing these aspects is crucial to satisfying the evolving demands of residents and tourists and preserving these places as attractive environments to live, work, and visit (Castaldi & Mendonça, 2022).

In general, it is important to recognise some limitations associated with the analysis presented in this study, particularly with regard to the research design and the data used. Specifically, TripAdvisor, similarly to other online platforms dedicated to sharing tourist experiences, emerged relatively recently. The dataset utilised in this study encompasses reviews spanning from the inception of TripAdvisor's operations in Europe in 2013–2021. While the extensive data collection enabled us to effectively distinguish between destinations with and without UNESCO World Heritage Sites on a European scale, it regrettably precluded the execution of longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of reviews over time dating back to, and in relation to, the date of WHS label recognition. As such, our research design did not allow us to tackle causal questions related to the effects of attaining the WHS label. Future research can aim at collecting longitudinal data and investigating the temporal properties of the WHS label effects on local tourism. Also, further research could explore differences across typologies of UNESCO sites, which include cultural, natural, mixed places and more. It would be useful to further investigate whether this occurs with different magnitudes depending on certain characteristics of the destinations, such as their tourism maturity, geography or the employment of specific brand management practices that differentiate them from other UNESCO sites.

In terms of policy implications, our study underlines the need for a strategic framework aligned with the dynamics of branding, trademarks, and quality enhancement. It is in the interest of local policymakers aiming for sustainable development to implement measures that continuously unify the different stakeholders under a

Table 5. Gologit model: UNESCO presence and evaluation of the accommodation and restaurants sectors (odds ratio).

Variables	(1) Accommodation (Cat. 1)	(2) Accommodation (Cat. 2)	(3) Restaurants (Cat. 1)	(4) Restaurants (Cat. 2)
UNESCO Presence	2.712***	1.143	1.030	1.030
	(0.930)	(0.204)	(0.177)	(0.177)
GDP (log)	0.899***	0.899***	1.225***	0.838***
	(0.0157)	(0.0157)	(0.0705)	(0.0137)
TS	1.105	1.105	0.444***	0.444***
	(0.125)	(0.125)	(0.0484)	(0.0484)
HCI	1.000	1.005***	1.005***	1.005***
	(0.0009)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Tot. Economic Damage (log)	0.239***	0.239***	0.00910***	0.304***
	(0.0636)	(0.0636)	(0.00621)	(0.0805)
Mountain	1.703***	2.086***	1.530***	1.530***
	(0.150)	(0.0768)	(0.0532)	(0.0532)
UNESCO Presence#mountain	0.912	0.912	1.067	1.067
	(0.143)	(0.143)	(0.163)	(0.163)
Coast	1.661***	1.176***	1.320***	1.320***
	(0.178)	(0.0496)	(0.0518)	(0.0518)
UNESCO Presence#coast	1.064	1.064	1.027	1.027
	(0.172)	(0.172)	(0.163)	(0.163)
Urban	0.882	0.697***	0.778***	0.778***
	(0.0830)	(0.0303)	(0.0325)	(0.0325)
UNESCO Presence#urban	1.236	1.236	1.160	1.160
	(0.215)	(0.215)	(0.196)	(0.196)
Constant	44.76***	2.149***	18.77***	16.82***
	(9.966)	(0.417)	(10.11)	(3.056)
Observations	16,431	16,431	19,387	19,387
P-value (Wald test)	0.7078		0.0805	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. We report the Wald test of parallel lines assumption for the final model for each outcome, where an insignificant test statistic indicates that the final model does not violate the proportional odds/parallel lines assumption. Significant levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Cat., category.

Table 6. Poisson regression: UNESCO presence and diversity index.

Variables	Diversity
UNESCO Presence	0.805*** (0.0723)
GDP (log)	0.0839*** (0.00835)
TS	−0.185*** (0.0558)
HCI	−0.00049** (0.0002)
Tot. Economic Damage (log)	−1.231*** (0.152)
Mountain	−0.0580*** (0.0183)
UNESCO Presence#mountain	−0.0388 (0.0621)
Coast	0.416*** (0.0201)
UNESCO Presence#coast	−0.297*** (0.0630)
Urban	0.0580*** (0.0222)
UNESCO Presence#urban	−0.0703
	(0.0699)
Constant	−1.029*** (0.0938)
Observations	22,899

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. Significant levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

shared commitment to quality, aware of the benefits but also the limitations inherent in branding practices. Sectors outside the conventional scope of tourism management, such as transportation, also need to actively participate in these efforts. This holistic approach ensures that every aspect of the tourist experience adheres to the highest quality standards, which is presently seldom the case.

Destination policies should embrace place branding practices that take on a comprehensive approach that also extend to the ongoing evaluation of strategy effectiveness. Detecting and correcting any discrepancies between operators is critical to ensuring a consistent tourist experience. Monitoring should not only cover the number of visitors but also the quality of their experience. User-generated content provides a wealth of rich and timely data to monitor the tourist experience. In this regard, places should also focus on ensuring a high-quality tourism experience and critically evaluate their ability to transform tourism flows into opportunities for regional development as a precondition for more sustainable tourism.

Table 7. Gologit model: diversity index and evaluation of the overall offer.

(1) Variables	(2) Scores (Cat. 1) Coeff.	(3) Scores (Cat. 2) Coeff	(4) Scores (Cat. 1) OR	(5) Scores (Cat. 2) OR
Diversity	3.177***	0.519***	23.99***	1.681***
	(0.356)	(0.0257)	(8.549)	(0.0433)
UNESCO Presence	0.395***	0.395***	1.484***	1.484***
	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.150)	(0.150)
GDP (log)	−0.180***	−0.180***	0.835***	0.835***
	(0.0175)	(0.0175)	(0.0146)	(0.0146)
TS	−0.447***	−0.447***	0.640***	0.640***
	(0.116)	(0.116)	(0.0743)	(0.0743)
HCI	0.0026***	0.0026***	1.003***	1.003***
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Tot. Economic Damage (log)	−3.548***	−1.375***	0.0288***	0.253***
	(0.765)	(0.260)	(0.0220)	(0.0657)
Mountain	0.483***	0.483***	1.620***	1.620***
	(0.0367)	(0.0367)	(0.0595)	(0.0595)
Coast	0.182***	0.182***	1.200***	1.200***
	(0.0429)	(0.0429)	(0.0514)	(0.0514)
Urban	0.375***	−0.163***	1.455***	0.850***
	(0.131)	(0.0429)	(0.191)	(0.0365)
Constant	5.395***	2.838***	220.2***	17.08***
	(0.224)	(0.195)	(49.35)	(3.326)
Observations	22,112	22,112	22,112	22,112
P-value (Wald test)	0.5420			

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. We report the Wald test of parallel lines assumption for the final model for each outcome, where an insignificant test statistic indicates that the final model does not violate the proportional odds/parallel lines assumption. The outcome is the mean of scores of all macro categories. Significant levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Cat., category; Coeff., coefficient; OR, odds ratio.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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NOTES

1. Briefly, when the χ^2 is found to be significant, it means that the proportional odds assumption (null hypothesis) is rejected and consequently not satisfied.
2. The Brant test's results for the outcome 'overall score' are: $\chi^2 = 50.49$, df = 11, and $p > \chi^2 = 0.000$. Although the results are based on one outcome (overall score), we extended the gologit model to the whole analysis. This must not be a concern since the coefficients produced in gologit should theoretically be similar to the ologit model, as the 'autofit' option was employed in the gologit analysis and the proportional odds assumption was not violated for all outcomes. The 'autofit' option simplifies the process of identifying partial proportional odds models that fit the data.
3. To strengthen the Brant test and confirm the gologit model as the best fit, we employ the Akaike information criterion (AIC) comparing the goodness of fit for the models that could be used for a categorical model: ordered logit (ologit), multinomial logit (mlogit) and gologit. The reasoning behind selecting models with varying AIC is that the most fitting models are those with the lowest AIC. The results show the gologit model is the most fit where: ologit (AIC = 24,635.77), mlogit (AIC = 24,610.15) and gologit2 (AIC = 24,608.45).
4. We chose the Poisson regression as the outcome of the Diversity Index contains several zeros in the distribution.

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