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PHILIPPE CORI: BRANDING WORLD HERITAGE: A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH FOR GLOBAL TOURISM. THESIS ADVISOR: PROF. RUSSEL STAIFF. PhD., 200 pp.

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Since its foundation in 1972, the World Heritage Convention recognizes and lists places of "outstanding universal value" that are part of the heritage of all humankind and make their protection a shared responsibility of the international community and of the concerned State Parties.

The World Heritage List continuously increased at hectic pace but with some gaps which seriously challenge the credibility of the concept of World Heritage and its truly outstanding universal value. This led to a brand image crisis of the World Heritage at a time of an exploding World Tourism placing World Heritage sites under the constant and growing threat of herds of tourists looking for the unique and outstanding experience to bring back on photographs.

The combination of individualism, globalisation and the demand of symbolic experiences have led to a shift away from producer or sales led marketing towards customer focused and customer driven business models where the brand acts as the logical and primary connection and mode of communication between the producer and the consumer (Ellwood, 2002).

The concept of branding is still quite ignored for World Heritage and only viewed as an emblem within its graphic and visual boundaries. There is yet no sense of the World Heritage as a brand which could make it as a sustainable and credible universal space which would connect people and promote diversity in a global world.

Therefore, this dissertation will attempt to build a strategic brand model for the World Heritage by bringing various spheres of academic knowledge together. The use of heritage interpretation theories and researches as well as of the theories and practices of branding will be central to the development of a possible brand model for the World Heritage.

It will also bring together disparate academic worlds as well as different scholarly research traditions to map a possible way to a sustainable World Heritage.

It will refer to several World Heritage sites which were visited by the author as examples to illustrate the present situation in relation to the branding of World Heritage sites.

This paper will be articulated around four stumbling blocks leading to the definition of a possible brand model for the World Heritage: It will first review the concept of the World Heritage through its history and the present brand image crisis and challenges it is now facing; It will then, outline the key theories, concepts and practices in branding and brand management; then, it will consider the theories and debates of Heritage interpretation which will be transposed in a brand management approach, and finally, it will assess World Tourism and its related implications in the branding of the World Heritage.

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