



# The Role and Importance of Women in the Revitalization of Intangible Heritage in Order to Maintain the Competitiveness of the Destination

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**Abstract:** *Within the Croatian intangible cultural heritage, traditions and customs, due to their specific functions, occupy a unique place in tourism. The oral transmission of tradition, the culture of memory is manifested in the contemporary application of traditional customs as the most vital model of duration, regardless of the new way of life in which traditional customs have lost their significance. This paper aims to highlight women's role in tradition's transference - a practice that belongs to women within the framework of intangible cultural heritage, but also female creativity which is closely related to sustainable tourism. Protected cultural goods of intangible heritage represent forms of cultural expression of particular importance in a certain area. Their historical roots testify to their exceptional value from a historical, artistic, ethnographic, sociological, anthropological, linguistic, or literary point of view. Intangible cultural heritage, which is passed down from generation to generation, provides a sense of identity and continuity and thus promotes respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. The paper aims to point out the role of intangible cultural heritage as a generator of destination development and the active role of women.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**C**ultural tourism, although one of the oldest selective forms of tourism, still today remains one of the forms that cannot be precisely defined. The activities and places that were visited, which today are called cultural content and the type of travel that is now called cultural tourism, were traveled as far back as the time of the ancient Romans who traveled to Greece and Egypt. Such trips, which included sightseeing at historical sites, and visits to festivals, events and museums, were part of a wider lexicon of sightseeing activities that formed a complete tourist experience (Du Cros & McKercher, 2015). Cultural tourism enables visitors to get to know different aspects of a certain culture in the destination they are traveling to and thus enriches tourists with new knowledge, and possibly the local population with knowledge on the part of visitors and a better understanding of tourism demand as a whole. *Cultural heritage includes artifacts, monuments, groups of buildings, and sites that have different values, including symbolic, historical, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific, and social significance.* (Richards, 1996:25)

Man has always belonged to a horde, a tribe, or, later, a nation. All that time within a certain nation meant the development of specific customs and the creation of its own traditions. This, in turn, favored the development of different cultures of expression, behavior, and work that become the identity of the people themselves, that is, they represent part of the cultural heritage of the people. *Cultural heritage can generally be divided into tangible and intangible. Intangible heritage is mainly created by the transmission from generation to generation and the oral*

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*transmission of customs of a certain group of people in a certain geographical location, while tangible cultural heritage represents what man has made with his own hands or found in nature. (Horvat Majzek, 2018:69)*

One of the very detailed definitions of intangible cultural heritage explains - *That “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (Scovazzi, 2012)*

*The sustainable development of tourism is based on the balanced management of ecological, socio-cultural, and economic development that will preserve the socio-cultural identity of the local community, improve their quality of life and ensure their well-being, while the development of quality tourist products and services will improve the quality and experience of tourists' satisfaction. and all this with the rational use and preservation of resources for the long-term generation of the aforementioned and the possibility of future generations using these resources. (Klarin, 2018)*

When talking about the typology of cultural tourism, considering its diversity and complexity, it can be divided into several categories. For example, Smith distinguishes in his book (Smith, 2009):

- heritage tourism,
- art tourism,
- creative tourism,
- urban cultural tourism,
- rural cultural tourism.

Heritage tourism refers to everything that is material. These can be castles, buildings, palaces, monuments, archaeological sites, etc. Heritage tourism also includes intangible cultural and historical heritage, i.e. ceremonies, festivals, customs, manifestations, etc. Tourist destinations try to attract tourists by presenting their past, showing through different cultural and historical values. In this way, they try to create a specific and unique image of what the destination offers tourists, introduce tourists to its traditions, and enable them to gather new knowledge and experiences. The role of women has changed throughout history. When it is correlated with the creation of cultural heritage in the past, women can be viewed from an ideological and cultural point of view, according to which it is considered that women are more in touch with the emotional sphere. From a socioeconomic point of view, women are placed in the area of reproduction, education, and household care. The relationship between women and the revitalization and protection of material cultural values can be viewed from two aspects: from the aspect of women as active creators in the creation of cultural tangible and intangible heritage, and the second is the role of women in transmitting knowledge in the creation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The distinction between male and female roles, “typically female roles” is the subject of this paper.

Gender has become an important factor in the economic processes of globalization, a criterion on which the world economy counts and by means of which certain market-economic relations and forces in that market are shaped and/or restructured. Gender is one of the main categories of social

life as one of the oldest characteristics of people. Historically looking at gender roles, men were seen as leaders, financial caretakers, and heads of the house, while women were the ones who did the shopping, maintained the home, and provided care and emotional support. Gender salience, as an important factor in the activation of stereotypes, indicates the extent to which a person's gender is highlighted. For example, if we see a woman with an extremely stereotypical appearance, we are more likely to expect that she has "typically female" personality traits and a "female role". Considering gender roles today, it is the woman who desperately tries to remove the stain from her favorite dress, chooses the best hair shampoo to attract "all the men", and chooses the healthiest biscuits for her children, while the man helps the neighbor with household repairs, knows which bank offers the most favorable loan, and he gets a raise, but with it "flexible working hours". Historically speaking, women were the ones who made Lepoglav lace, whose role and significance in the framework of sustainable tourism is the subject of this research.

## 2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND DISCUSSION

In sustainable tourism, women have a significant role in preserving intangible heritage, given the fact that throughout history they have created it. Natural and cultural heritage, as the basis of life and identity, is a permanent problem in societies. Women have made great progress within the formal labor market during the last quarter of the 20th century, which is the result of, among other things, women's resistance to the system of inequality and policies that allowed gender discrimination in the labor market, various dimensions of labor discrimination are still present in that market, and when it comes to sustainable tourism, they are expected to play a significant role in the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Croatian society is a modern society, but it has a number of characteristics of traditional culture, which was historically created by the collective action of people in different localities (regions), hence the diversity and wealth of heritage. Tradition has provided us with numerous material, social and spiritual goods that form cultural heritage. Tradition is not the past but *preserved progress, progress is continued tradition* (Weizsäcker, 1988).

Traditional societies are slowly changing, reproducing societies with an unchanged natural and cultural environment, in which the role of women is clearly defined. That is why they are able to accumulate and use the inherited assets and value system as cultural heritage. It may be contradictory, but it was in that society that most of the cultural heritage was created - from the construction characteristic of the wealthy class to social (marriage, customs, the relationship between men and women) and spiritual traditions (beliefs, religion, ethos). Tradition consolidates and preserves cultural heritage, especially intangible, but over time it acts selectively, so some "products" of culture fall into oblivion.

The skills, knowledge, and technologies of making today's significant cultural products are not devoid of identity. The classifications of trades have changed over time, but the basic division in this sphere is based on gender identity. The division into men's and women's trades originates from the oldest period of human history. Some authors call women's crafts "occupations". The products of women's craftsmanship come from domestic craftsmanship. They were rarely intended for the market, they mainly served to meet the needs of the family or the cooperative.

According to the above, defined research objectives:

- the current tourist offer focused on intangible cultural heritage is based on the gender division of traditional crafts and skills, which economically encourages the development of the local community;

- a key role in the promotion of modern and sustainable tourism in the local context and the expression of identity is played by traditionally female crafts and skills;
- the local community through the organization of events, education and other content becomes an active participant in economic progress and gender inclusion using the variety of intangible cultural heritage;
- intangible cultural heritage becomes a generator of local community development, increasing gender inclusiveness and familiarity with the destination itself.

**Hypothesis One:** Cultural heritage is one of the instruments of cultural identity and promotion of diversity and it is impossible to present it without intangible cultural heritage.

**Hypothesis Two:** The gender approach to intangible cultural heritage additionally affirms cultural heritage, and at the same time makes women step out of the sphere of invisibility and become an agent of development and an important stakeholder in sustainable tourism.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The scientific method used to collect primary data was a survey, and respondents gave their answers anonymously. The research was conducted on a deliberate random sample of all visitors who have stayed in Lepoglava at some point and based on their experience have an experience of Lepoglava as a tourist destination. The research was conducted on 253 respondents who stayed in Lepoglava and know the elements of making Lepoglav lace. The sample consisted of 253 respondents. Regarding gender, there are 162 (64%) women and 91 (36%) men. The majority of respondents are aged 36-45, 92 of them (36.4%), 32 (12.6%) are under 25, 57 (22.5%) are between 26-35, 38 (15%) respondents are aged 46-55, 26 (10.3%) respondents are 56-65 years old, while 8 (3.2%) respondents are over 66 years old. According to the level of education, 87 (34.4%) of the respondents have a higher professional degree/master's degree, 80 (31.6%) have a second professional degree, and 68 (26.9%) have a higher professional degree/bachelor's degree. The least number of respondents, 8 (3.2 %) have a doctoral degree, and only 10 (4.0 %) have completed elementary school. At most, 174 (68.8 %) respondents are employed persons, 22 (8.7 %) are retired, 16 (6.3 %) are students, 11 (4.3 %) are postgraduate students, while there are a smaller number of respondents with their own OPG, craftsmen or subjects of some other employment. According to the number of household members, 125 (49.4%) respondents live in a household with 4-7 people, 124 (49%) with 1-3 people, while only 4 (1.6%) respondents stated that they live in a joint household with 8 and more people. 101 (39.9%) respondents have incomes higher than HRK 7,001, slightly less, 54 (21.3%) of them have incomes from HRK 5,001 to HRK 7,000, 38 (15%) respondents have incomes from HRK 3,001 to HRK 5,000, and up to HRK 3,000 per month, there are 28 (11.1%) respondents. 32 (12.6%) of the respondents stated that they did not have their own income.

**Table 1.** Measures of mean and dispersion, and coefficient of internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) of the rating scale of Lepoglav attractions according to personal taste

	N	Arithmetic middle	SD	Minimum – maximum	Cronbach Alpha
Days of Lepoglav lace	253	4,10	1,1	1-5	0,806
Mineral fair - Lepoglav gate	253	3,86	1,2	1-5	0,806
An extinct volcano	253	3,82	1,2	1-5	0,806
Pauline culture	253	3,70	1,2	1-5	0,806
Penal correctional facility in Lepoglav	253	3,04	1,4	1-5	0,806

**Source:** Own research

Means and dispersion of ratings of Lepoglav attractions according to personal taste are shown in Table 1. We notice that the most attractive is Lepoglav lace, arithmetic mean of 4.10 (standard deviation SD 1.1), mineral fair - Lepoglav agate arithmetic mean of 3.91 (SD 1,1), the Pauline culture with an arithmetic mean of 3.86 (SD 1.2), the extinguished volcano of an arithmetic mean of 3.82 (SD 1.2), then the Pauline culture with an arithmetic mean of 3.70 (SD 1.2), and the least attractive Penal correctional facility in Lepoglavan with arithmetic mean rating of 3.04 (SD 1.4). The Cronbach Alpha internal reliability coefficient for the rating scale of Lepoglav attractions according to personal taste is 0.806, which means that it is a good tool for evaluating individual attractions according to personal taste in our sample.

In Table 2, we can see that 138 (54.5%) respondents bought a souvenir that exudes and tells the story of Lepoglava culture while visiting Lepoglava, and 179 (70.8%) of them stated that they were satisfied with the souvenir and repeated the purchase. 29 (11.5%) respondents bought souvenirs in the tourist community, at a fair or event in Lepoglava and 75 (29.6%) respondents, and 28 (11.1%) outside the city of Lepoglava. 121 (47.8 %) respondents bought the souvenir elsewhere. When asked which of the souvenirs seen tells the story of the town of Lepoglava as a tourist destination the most. 92% of respondents stated that the Lepoglav lace is the most expressive souvenir and without it, it is impossible to imagine the city of Lepoglava as a destination.

**Table 2.** Distribution of respondents according to whether they bought a souvenir, where they bought it, and whether they were satisfied with the souvenir and repeated the purchase

	Number (%) of respondents
<b>When visiting Lepoglava, did you buy a souvenir that exudes and tells the story of Lepoglava's culture?</b>	
NO	115 (45,5)
YES	138 (54,5)
<b>If your answer is yes, where did you buy the souvenir?</b>	
To the Tourist Board	29 (11,5)
At a fair or event in Lepoglava and its surroundings	75 (29,6)
At a fair or event outside the city of Lepoglava	28 (11,1)
Else	121 (47,8)
<b>Are you satisfied with the souvenir and repeat the purchase?</b>	
NO	74 (29,2)
YES	179 (70,8)

**Source:** Own research

Using the Student's t-test, we tested the existence of a difference in the assessment of familiarity with certain attractions in relation to whether they had visited which landmark of Lepoglava. We set the significance level at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . All probabilities (p) are lower than the level of significance, and we can say that there is a significant difference in the evaluation of all attractions according to whether the respondents visited one of the sights or not, that is, hypothesis H1 is accepted, which reads: The experience of Lepoglava as a prison town by the general public of Croatia has changed. As we can see from Table 3, the respondents who visited one of the sights of Lepoglava gave a significantly higher rating to the knowledge of certain attractions compared to those who did not visit the sights. Those who visited one of the sights rated their knowledge of Lepoglav lace significantly better ( $t = -4.5$ ,  $df=121$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), the mineral fair - Lepoglav agate ( $t = -5.3$ ,  $df=251$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), an extinct volcano ( $t = -4.5$ ,  $df=251$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), Pauline culture ( $t = -6.9$ ,  $df=251$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and KPD Lepoglav ( $t = -2, 2$ ,  $df=251$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The highest score for knowledge of individual attractions was Lepoglav lace with a score of arithmetic mean of 4.13 (standard deviation of 1.1), and the extinct volcano was the least known, with a score of arithmetic means of 3.05 (standard deviation of 1.04).



**Table 3.** Knowledge of individual attractions of the City of Lepoglava in relation to whether they have visited any of Lepoglava's landmarks

Have you visited any of the sights of the city:		Number of the respondents	Arithmetic Middle (SD)	Difference	95% range reliability FROM TO	t (df)	P*
Days of Lepoglav lace	NO	80	3,33 (1,4)	-0,808	-1,2	-4,5 (121)	<0,001
	YES	173	4,13 (1,1)		-0,5		
Mineral fair - Lepoglav gate	NO	80	2,19 (1,3)	-0,986	-1,4	-5,3 (251)	<0,001
	YES	173	3,17 (1,4)		-0,6		
An extinct volcano	NO	80	2,21 (1,3)	-0,840	-1,2	-4,5 (251)	<0,001
	YES	173	3,05 (1,4)		-0,5		
Pauline culture	NO	80	2,41 (1,3)	-1,171	-1,5	-6,9 (251)	<0,001
	YES	173	3,58 (1,2)		-0,8		
Penal correctional facility in Lepoglav	NO	80	3,46 (1,3)	-0,376	-0,7	-2,2 (251)	0,026
	YES	173	3,84 (1,2)		-0,05		

Note: \*Student's t-test

Source: Own research

Preservation of natural and cultural heritage is part of the national awareness of its identity past and present, but also part of the heritage that belongs to global movements for the protection of natural and cultural diversity. Heritage is what is inherited (locally, nationally, globally) from the past and a number of previous generations and its interpretation in the touristic sense are impossible without the role of women. Preservation of heritage is a relationship between tradition and the future - future generations. Protection and preservation guarantee the affirmation of some values of tradition and accessibility in use.

**Table 4.** The connection between women and intangible cultural heritage through the prism of respondents about Lepoglav lace

Your opinion on the role of women in the creation and preservation of cultural intangible heritage on the example of Lepoglav lace

Elements	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)
The role of Lepoglava lace in cultural events	0,302**
The connection of Lepoglav lace with other works of art from Lepoglava	0,399**
Lepoglav lace in the myths and legends of the region	0,473**
Lepoglav lace has a religious meaning for the inhabitants of Lepoglava	0,458**
Lepoglav lace has a metaphysical meaning for the inhabitants of Lepoglava	0,442**
Lepoglav lace is recognizable beyond the borders of Croatia	0,716**
Lepoglav lace is a reflection of female creativity and skill	0,464**
Love for the land is woven into the Lepoglav lace	0,499**
In history, Lepoglav lace represented a way of using free time	0,506**
Making Lepoglav lace today is a matter of preserving tradition	0,435**
Lepoglav lace should be used more in the production of other clothing products	0,325**
Making Lepoglav lace is exclusively a women's craft	0,531**
Lepoglava lace is an original souvenir of the Lepoglava region	0,488**

Note: \*\* p < 0,01

Source: Own research

*The centuries-old tradition of making lace in the Lepoglav area gave birth to and has preserved to this day a distinctive form of lacemaking, which is primarily recognizable thanks to the talent of Danica Brossler. Her talent was followed by a large number of hard-working women - lace-makers who knew how to translate her ideas into a finished product - which we recognize today as Lepoglav lace (Vrtiprah, 2006). Only women participate in the production of Lepoglav lace, and with their knowledge, skills, and techniques, they represent the character of Lepoglava and Varaždin County and the spirit of the local population of the entire county. Women's jobs included the*

making of clothes and other items, which often went beyond their use value and became part of a valuable heritage in the household, church, or monastery. The authors of valuable items and decorations made of lace and embroideries of high artistic value most often remained anonymous, and their products made of sensitive and consumable materials, canvas, wool, silk, and thread were easily destroyed. In the skill of embroidery, the nuns in the monasteries took the lead and made and decorated church and priestly vestments from fine and expensive materials (silk, silver and gold threads, pearls). Table 4 shows the relationship between women and Lepoglav lace. Table 4 indicates a positive correlation between the role and importance of women in the production of Lepoglav lace. The value of the correlation coefficient from 0 to 1 is a positive correlation and indicates a balanced relationship between women, the making of Lepoglav lace, its importance in national identity, and the necessity of preservation. The role of Lepoglav lace in cultural events  $r=0.302$ ; Correlation of Lepoglava lace with other works of art from Lepoglava  $r=0.399$ ; Lepoglav lace in myths and legends of the region  $r=0.473$ ; Lepoglava lace has a religious meaning for the inhabitants of Lepoglava  $r=0.458$ ; meaning for the inhabitants of Lepoglava  $r=0.442$ .

Due to the size of the community (spatial and population), as well as the fact that the town of Lepoglava hardly has a person who is not in some way or another directly related to Lepoglava lace (be it a family member, fellow resident, acquaintance, etc.), the culture of the Paulines (priests) who recognized the beauty of lace so many years ago, today represents a very specific cultural phenomenon.

With the great division of labor in the past, it was women who stood out, whose skill was recognizable and enabled them to have better living conditions through lace making. Craftsmanship was highly valued in all time and space units. In our country, even today, it is said that “a craft is worth its weight in gold”, and one who “creates what he sees with his eyes” is regarded as very capable.

In the era of industrialization, some trades are gradually dying out, and some are disappearing. Their products, which are still used, evoke nostalgic memories of the “good old days”. What makes craftsmanship, and especially the art of making Lepoglav lace, specific compared to other categories is their non-national character. Namely, the making of Lepoglav lace is conditioned by the skills of natural resources, and the social life of the Lepoglav region, and is therefore tied to the identity of the local community, which was created and preserved from decay by women.

#### **4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Future trends of personalization and niche markets in tourism can be used to strengthen further and emphasize the importance of intangible heritage and women’s role in it. Each destination could built-on on its USP and become more prominent and attract high-ticket clients. Providing finance for young scientists to dig deeper into these themes and with research results give precise answers to their communities, regions, local businesses, and women because they have skills but do not have the resources and knowledge to make a good living from these skills. There are numerous examples like Lepoglav in Croatia because of our rich history and handy people/women. For instance: Korčula’s cake Lumblija or Strudelfest in a small village near Karlovac. Both examples are part of an intangible heritage passed by women; mother to daughter for centuries. In this way, it is possible to strengthen the local economy, and the significance of some niche destinations, keep young women in smaller towns and ensure their secure existence and independence. Traditionally women’s crafts and skills play a key role in the promotion of modern and sustainable tourism in the local context. This hypothesis could be further investigated.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Observing concrete opportunities on selected examples and interesting ones exposed to strong depopulation, especially in rural areas, it is essential to achieve communication with young people who are a necessary element in defining a general and gender approach to cultural heritage. The educational system plays a particularly important role in this, through which it is possible to influence the change of the cultural model. Changing consciousness and patriarchal patterns is a long-term process that requires the involvement of all social structures. At the level of the local community, it is necessary to analyze cultural practices in detail and harmonize them with the own dynamics and development plans of the tourist destination. By introducing a gender perspective into local tourism policies, it is possible to influence the speed and efficiency of establishing gender equality. The manner and dynamics by which knowledge and skills will be affirmed as unused capacities of women, especially in rural areas, will establish the process of embedding this approach in the entire cultural heritage as an indispensable cultural and touristic product. To be yourself, to find your uniqueness, to harmonize the experiences of the elderly and the needs of the young, to nurture and be proud of tradition, to transform resources into a sustainable economy - this is the imperative of preserving women's heritage, as shown by examples and conducted research.

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