

Anastasiadou, C., Pilcher, N., Gutu, M., & Panyik, E. (2023). EU tourism and student identities in a pre-BREXIT UK. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 99, Article 103545.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103545>

EU TOURISM AND STUDENT IDENTITIES IN A PRE-BREXIT UK

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism constitutes a domain which expresses broader processes of societal identity formation, negotiation, and transformation (Adams, 2016), reinforcing national messages internally, by binding citizens together (Henderson, 2003), and externally, by communicating a nation's greatness (Naef, 2016). Outbound tourism experiences may offer important symbolic contexts for national identity construction; both affirming and expressing national identity (Yang, French, Lee and Watabe., 2020). Consequently, cultural tourism, heritage sites and special events are utilised to promote state sanctioned messages about local and national identities and destination branding (Viol, Todd, Theodoraki and Anastasiadou, 2018).

The European Union (EU) has similarly attempted to transpose national-level strategies to construct a shared, European identity detached from physical locations or places but linked to specific heritage sites (Lähdesmäki, 2016) implementing top-down approaches, with some limited success (Verstraete, 2002). Bolstered by the freedom of movement, tourism and heritage are claimed as key processes that help construct a European identity in official EU discourse (EC, 1995; 2001). However, empirical studies (e.g., Gaggio, 2016) have not adequately considered how tourism impacts on individuals' perceptions of their identities in practice, nor whether intra-European mobilities create 'unity' through appreciation of (past) 'diversity' and cultural heritage. Despite some recent movement away from specific actions to support development of a European identity (Grimm, 2021), "the increasing re-nationalisation tendencies and growing alienation from the 'European project' being witnessed at present, of which Brexit is but one concrete expression, make the questions 'What is Europe?' and 'Where is it going?' timely, and put the issue of a European identity back on the political agenda" (Prutsch, 2017, p.39).

This paper compares theorized tourism and heritage assertions in EU documentation, (top-down) against the actualized travel experiences of young Europeans (bottom-up). Given the recent upsurge in movements elsewhere to exit the EU [e.g., Frexit in France (Malgouyres and Mazet-Sonilhac, 2018)] and EU bodies' unease over the directions of particular policy initiatives and governments [e.g. Poland and Hungary (Kapelańska-Pręgowska, 2021; Varga and Buzogány, 2021)] it is key to understand how young Europeans view the reality of EU tourism and heritage assertions. Only by understanding how such initiatives are understood can their value and appropriacy be determined. On analysis of empirical data collected in Spring 2015, we conclude that the EU's unfluctuating approach of gazing to the past to identify commonalities risks dividing rather than uniting Europeans. Instead, policy makers should consider a broader range of tourist experiences to engage young Europeans with the European project and its values, and further enable environments where bottom-up identity formation can intensify. Using heritage

tourism to support identity formation should be reconsidered in light of contemporary debates surrounding heritage and identity, inclusivity, and representation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *European Identity*

Policy makers value identity as a political tool to achieve or reinforce ‘unity’ and create a ‘sense of belonging’ (Prutsch, 2017) in possibly highly differentiated nation states. Fundamental to EU identity is the concept of ‘collective identity.’ (Collective) Identity can be actively influenced through political action, thus affording alignment of ‘unity and ‘belonging’ with politically desired objectives. Collective identity is multidimensional (Tajfel, 1981) and cognitively, individuals need to perceive themselves as members of a group. This cognitive dimension denotes an affective relationship to communities: one must both identify *as*, and *with*, the collective (Cram, 2012, p. 72) – i.e., feel attached to it. Collective identities incorporate beliefs encompassing inclusion to the collective. These criteria can be based on civic (e.g., accepting democratic values and human rights) or ethnic/cultural (e.g., common ethno-histories) constructions of collective identity (Bruter, 2005). Collective identities thus entail individual and collective parts (Smith, 1992), are socially constructed (Risse, 2010), and people can simultaneously hold multiple collective identities (Diéz Medrano and Gutiérrez, 2001).

Established in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), European citizenship is the instrumental expression and legal prerequisite of European identity (Mayer and Palmowski, 2004). It is based on values of dignity, freedom, equality, tolerance, solidarity, democracy, and the rule of law (Prutsch, 2017), and expressed in rights such as freedom to move and reside in the EU, and to vote and stand in local and European parliamentary elections (Cram, 2012). While national identity requires cultural commonality (Smith, 1992), European citizenship is tangible, practical, and complementary to national citizenship.

Developing European identity to support EU integration was first championed to defend representative democracy, rule of law, social justice, and human rights (EC, 1973). Theoretically, a ‘collective’ EU identity is achieved through strong common identification bonds forged through social, political, and economic exchanges (Deutsch et al., 1957). Symbols and narratives thus emphasize commonalities, and deploy strategies of inclusion and exclusion (Bruter, 2005) to shape EU collective identity. Establishing institutions, a common market and cooperative structures, and exposure to them were deemed essential to inculcate European values and norms (Zürn and Checkel, 2005). However, in practice, economic and political environmental changes, and scepticism towards the European project has influenced how European identity has been redefined over time (cf. Diez, 2022).

A ‘united-in-diversity’ approach characterises many European cultural initiatives, acknowledging Europe’s plurality of cultures and simultaneously contending interconnections and underlying common elements to produce an imagined cultural community in Europe (Sassatelli, 2002). However, unity in diversity is considered superficially rhetorical and a contradiction that cannot function in practice due to Europe’s historical diversity and memories of past conflicts (Verstraete, 2002). Indeed, many have critiqued European identity formations as being overly nostalgic and essentialist (Delanty, 1995; 2000; Orchard, 2002) stressing how such focuses create racism and xenophobia (Orchard 2002), and that a more political approach is

needed, often distinguishing the civic/political from a more culturally based/affective European identity (Bruter 2005).

Despite much effort, national identities remain stronger than an EU identity, which is dogged by competing understandings of Europe as cultural community of shared values, and Europe as political community of shared democratic practices (Prutsch, 2017). The rejection of the European Constitution Treaty in 2005 ostensibly led to an EU transition from a failed (Grimm, 2021) top-down focus to a bottom-up focus to develop identity organically through citizen engagement and valuing EU cultural, political, and social ideals (Prutsch, 2017) instead of political elites determining European identity. Nevertheless, new initiatives remain unfluctuating, and uniformly targeted as previous approaches. Although EU initiatives may appear to desire a supranational identity (Pykre, 2020), recent EU narratives such as the European Way of Life (EWOL) very much emphasise unity no longer in diversity, European rule of law and rights and shared values (Foret and Trino, 2022). Thus, understanding the different ways individuals see their own identities, and those of the EU, is key, arguably for the fundamental perception of the EU project itself.

2.2 Tourism and European Identity Formation

Scholars and policymakers alike champion tourism and cross-border mobility to create a common European identity (Fligstein, 2008). Indeed, although some find encountering ‘exotic’ destinations may reinforce everyday life normalcy or re-entrench existing identities through contrasts (Gaggio, 2016), many EU initiatives’ underpinning rationale (e.g., Erasmus student exchange, town-twinning, and pan-European research) is that Europeans become aware of commonalities and develop a shared, supranational identity (Favell and Reimer, no date) through cross-border mobilities. Consequently, the EU promotes the forging of an EU identity as intrinsically, and fundamentally, linked with cross-border mobilities, including tourism. Indeed, a 2018 Eurobarometer survey found EU citizens considered Erasmus exchanges as the EU’s third-placed greatest achievement, with maintenance of peace second, and free movement of people, goods, and services first (Pryke, 2020).

Tourism has theoretically informed policies and priorities regarding identity construction since the 1970s (Tekiner, 2020a). The Cultural Routes Programme (1987) and the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) initiative (1985) created new heritage and cultural tourism opportunities, to promote common European values (CoE, 2010), and a sense of belonging through cultural exchanges revitalising cultural offerings and rejuvenating declining areas. By the mid-1990s a common European heritage was championed to help develop European identity, thus necessitating fundamental re-interpretation of Europe’s heritage away from previous traditional nationalistic interpretations (Ashworth and Larkham, 1994).

Since 2010, the Council of Europe, the independent, larger organisation focused on human rights, which initiated the Cultural Routes programme, developed strong cooperation with the European Parliament and European Commission for cultural heritage. The collaboration of the CoE Cultural Routes with the European Commission’s Directorate General Enterprise and Industry Tourism Unit led to four cooperation agreements and Joint Management Programmes on cultural routes (CoE, 2022a). The overall objective of the 4th Joint Programme (2015-2017) was to increase Europe’s visibility as a tourist destination and of its diverse destinations, contributing to the touristic visibility and quality of Cultural Routes, preparing for certification

by, the Council of Europe (CoE, 2022b). Lähdesmäki's (2016, p.777) analysis of EU initiatives "revealed five strategies of 'placing heritage': rewarding labels and awards to sites; particularising cities; emphasising historical monuments; creating new museums or exhibition spaces; and iconizing EU administrative buildings".

Nation states use heritage and cultural tourism sites to reinforce cohesion and belonging (Bhandari and Bhandari, 2012) among host communities. Multi-ethnic nations (Henderson, 2003), new nations (Hitchcock, 1999), and countries transitioning in their political systems (Zhang, Fong, Li and Ly, 2019), have also utilised heritage and cultural tourism for such purposes. For instance, to gain EU membership post-communist European countries actively downplayed communist pasts and promoted pre-communist identities, using heritage and cultural tourism sites to validate such narratives (Ivanova, 2017). Here, new identities are defined selectively, with "difficult" pasts often silenced, omitted, or forgotten (Rivera, 2008). Curated heritage attractions (Park, 2010), cultural festivals (Zhang et al., 2019), and commemoration events (Viol et al., 2018), may also promote and interpret regional identities (Palmer 1999). Finally, hosting tourists may engender national pride and unity and catalyse identity re-interpretation among local community members (Jamison, 1999).

Regional and national traveling and experiencing places may also reaffirm, challenge, or alter religious, national, racial, or ethnic identities (Adams, 2016). Yang, et al., (2020) show international tourism affirmed Chinese national identity through symbolic interaction between Chinese tourists and the outside world, while Rátz, Michalkó and Keszeg, (2020) relate the Hungarian government's attempts to reinforce national sentiment among students through school trips to neighbouring countries' Hungarian communities. Few studies, however, consider how travelling abroad transforms individual identities (Yang et al., 2020).

Whereas building common identities based on heritage has succeeded nationally (e.g., Henderson, 2003; Naef, 2016), internationally, historical accounts differ, and European history is often contentious (Tekiner, 2020b), and divisive. Seemingly symbolic initiatives on common European Heritage may serve regionalist and nationalist rather than European, identities and cultures (Aceska and Mitroi, 2021). Nevertheless, official EU discourse consistently posits that tourism brings citizens closer through discovering and sharing common European values (EC, 2001), helping shape European identity and strengthening European citizenship (EC, 2006; Verstraete, 2002) through promoting cosmopolitanism and familiarisation with other countries (Urry, 1995), particularly amongst younger, more educated individuals (Van Mol, 2013).

Yet, little empirical evidence exists that travelling promotes a shared, European identity. As travelling can redefine people's notions of national identity (Yang et al., 2020), and age can be a major determinant in having a European identity (Risse, 2010), we decided to explore whether the experiences of young Europeans, a target audience for many EU initiatives, mirrored official EU assertions that travelling reinforces a common, shared, European identity, and identify whether civic or cultural aspects of European identity were more prominent.

3. METHODOLOGY

To gain in-depth insights of both top-down and bottom-up processes of European identity formation, the study followed a mixed method, single phase, triangulation research design. This

incorporated documentary analysis of selected official EU publications, and a questionnaire survey with a single, open-ended, qualitative question included to validate and embellish the quantitative data (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Adopting Dewey's pragmatist standpoint (Biesta, 2010), that states knowledge results from our actions and their consequences, we applied a convergent parallel design whereby the different approaches were undertaken concurrently and brought together during interpretation (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The pragmatist perspective acknowledges epistemology is about arguments, and as our research is primarily about understanding EU narratives and respondent experiences, we adopt a subjectivist epistemology and social ontology (Biesta, 2010).

3.1 Instrument Design

The questionnaire was an adaptation of the multi-scale instrument developed by the EUCROSS project (EUCROSS, 2011) to evaluate travel habits. The survey contained 14 items gathering basic demographics (Gender, Age, Country of Origin, Family Status); whether respondents have lived in other countries, number of trips abroad, countries visited and why, and their last holiday abroad budget. Then it gathered perceptions of personal identity, including Geographic Identity (5 items), Citizenship (5 items), European Identity (11 items) and attitudes toward European Travel (8 items). Finally, respondents were asked to recall and briefly describe a travel experience that affected their sense of national or European identity. This was an elective question that 77 respondents answered.

3.2 Time Space Context

The study findings are based on a unique set of time-context related data that capture a snapshot of European students visiting, living, and studying in a UK university several months after the Scottish independence referendum, which took place on 18th September 2014, and while the UK's Brexit referendum was only an electoral promise for some UK parties in the upcoming May 2015 general election. Historically the relationship between the UK and the EU had been uneasy, largely driven by economic imperatives and self-interest rather than affect (Curtice, 2016; Saunders, 2018). Membership had been accompanied by policy opt-outs and indisposition towards EU imposed rules and regulation on the UK. The rise in popularity of the single issue, UK Independence Party (UKIP), who campaigned on the UK's exit from the EU, placed additional pressure on the ruling Conservative party, who had been divided on the issue since the 1975 UK in out referendum (Smith, 2017), to commit to a referendum as an electoral promise. For Smith (2017) the referendum was the culmination of years of unease with the European project and sustained desire to leave by politicians from across the political spectrum.

Whereas consecutive Eurobarometer surveys (Eurobarometer, 2014; 2021) evidenced a lack of identification with European identity for the British public, there was significant difference between Scotland and the rest of UK, where Scottish nationalism was tied to European identity (Foley, 2022) and pro-EU feelings were consistently higher (Curtice, 2016). The Scottish independence cause was seen to be profoundly influenced by the role of the EU (Morisi, 2018). In the run up to the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, the continuation of EU membership for an independent Scotland was used as a lever to argue how Scottish independence would automatically lead to exiting the EU for the whole of the UK, including Scotland. Perhaps prophetically, former First Minister for Scotland Alex Salmond had expressed concerns that the forthcoming Brexit referendum could see Scotland exiting the EU against its will (cf. Dennison,

Davidov and Seddig, 2020), arguing conversely that Scottish independence would cement Scotland's continued EU participation.

Whilst the UK was about to determine its future in the EU, European politics as a whole was experiencing a rise in Euroscepticism largely because of the Eurozone crisis of 2012, which “triggered an unprecedented level of politicisation of EU economic governance and its redistributive effects” (Kutter, p. 662, 2020) across member states. The 2015 migrant crisis which began to unfold in Europe just as the data collection was underway (April 2015) would further bring to the forefront notions of European identity (Braun, 2020).

Data collection thus took place at a critical crossroads, whilst the relevance and significance of the European integration process was affecting national and regional politics, and notions of regional, national and European identity were at the forefront of national political debates. The data thus represents the unique, and highly valuable (cf. Morisi, 2018) time-context of presenting the perceptions of young people at a time when Scotland's place in the EU was still relatively secure, the possibility of the UK exiting the EU only a mooted notion, but Euroscepticism was rising across EU states. Such factors could have conditioned the results of the research by providing a context where views going against the EU project could be aired, but from a position of security.

3.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed in April 2015 to undergraduate and postgraduate students at a UK University Business School holding European country passports (as opposed to EU member country only), including short term exchange visit (Erasmus), and double articulation degree students. In total, 267 usable responses were collected, and included students of mixed backgrounds and those possibly born outside Europe but now residing in Europe through short- or longer-term mobility. The research was approved by the appropriate ethics committees and followed all ethical standards for data collection, storage, and management.

Most respondents were female (65.2%). The most common age group was 18-24 (83.4%) with only 0.7% in the 40-47 years age group. Average female age was 23, and 22 for males. Respondents originally from the UK constituted 47.2%, other EU countries 45.7%, and the rest of the World 7.1%. Overall, about 67.8% resided in the UK and 28.5% in other EU countries, and 55.5% were in years 1 to 3, and the rest in year 4, postgraduate, and Masters' level (see Appendix 1 for full participant profile).

Table 1: Respondent Profile

Item	No	%
Gender:		
Male	93	34.8
Female	174	65.2
Missing	0	0
Total	267	100
Age:		
18-24	221	83.4
25-31	33	12.4
32-39	8	3.1
40-47	3	0.7
Missing	2	0.4
Total	267	100
Origin:		
UK	126	47.2
EU	122	45.7
Europe	6	2.3
Rest of the World	12	4.4
Missing	1	0.4
Total	267	100

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire survey was analysed using descriptive statistics; EU documentation and open question responses were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) staged approach to thematic analysis. We used mixed inductive and deductive coding to generate data-based meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2012) for the EU documentation and inductive coding for the open question. The first, data familiarization stage involved close reading of key EU tourism and heritage documents, these were retrieved from the EU website (.eu). Successive rounds of coding using NVivo software revealed an overall theme of 'EU approaches to identity and tourism' with sub-themes of 'Emphasis on Heritage'; 'Significance of Cultural Tourism'; 'United in Diversity' and 'Intra-European Travel, Identity and Citizenship'. Inductive analysis of the 78 open question survey responses identified 'otherness', 'common identity', 'functional benefits', 'study experience' and 'work experience' as the most common themes. These responses are presented in vignette form alongside the quantitative findings.

The study used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify the main drivers of European identity when travelling within the EU, and benefits of being an EU national. To assess the suitability of data for EFA, KMO Sampling Adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used, and scored (0.575 and 808.419) and (0.782 and 1055.124) respectively (see Table 5). The test of sphericity was significant, showing sufficient correlations among chosen variables, $p < 0.001$

3.5 Evaluation of Quality

Further to testing the survey instrument's validity and reliability, we adopted Creamer's (2018) mixed method, quality evaluation criteria of transparency, credibility, trustworthiness, and transferability of findings. As EU publications were retrieved from the EU website (.eu), the authenticity, credibility, and accuracy of documents (Bowen, 2009) was straightforward to establish. The selection process also ensured their representativeness, and that interpretative comprehensiveness criterion was met (Creamer, 2018). The authors strived for balance between objectivity and subjectivity when evaluating documents (Biesta, 2010) and to avoid biased selectivity (Bowen, 2009). In providing verbatim respondent statements as vignettes, the trustworthiness (Creamer, 2018) of researcher interpretation can be confirmed and others can see how themes were selected (Tight, 2019), thereby enhancing transferability to other contexts. To meet the credibility criterion, we used data triangulation and researcher triangulation in examining the codes and interpreting the secondary and open question data, and to address possible researcher bias.

4. FINDINGS

First, respondents were asked to reflect on the importance of geographical identities when travelling within the EU (Table 2). The percentage 'important' is highest across National identity. European identity is viewed as 'moderately important' on a par with global identity, whereas local and regional identity are more important than European identity. As European identity may be perceived as constructed belonging, it can co-exist with other identities (Prutsch, 2017).

Table 2: Significance of geographical identities

Reliability Statistics Alpha = (0.748)	Unimportant	Little important	Moderately important	Important	Very important	Missing
Local identity	29	36	66	87	40	9
Regional identity	21	45	78	82	32	9
National identity	15	11	69	103	60	9
European identity	24	38	82	79	35	9
Global Identity	34	44	77	68	34	10

Next, respondents were asked to self-identify using the Moreno question (Kuhn, 2012) to better understand multiple identities (Figure 1).

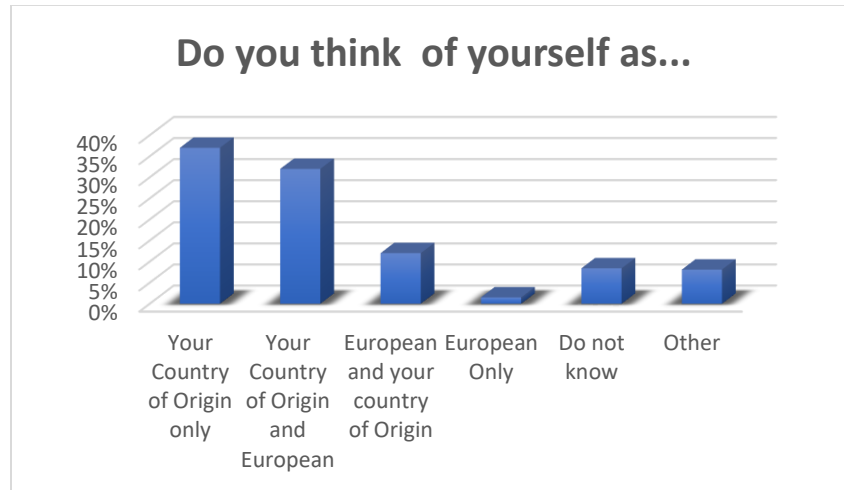


Figure 1: Notions of identity

Around 30% recognised national identity first, and European identity second, whereas around 35% only associated with national identity. Westle and Buchheim (2016) argue those who hold an exclusive European identity mainly reject national identity. This was a miniscule percentage- in the other category, individuals added citizen of the world. Around 10% selected ‘Do not know’ and the ‘Other’ option, where individuals described themselves as world citizens.

Some respondents noted the psychological distance of the UK from “Europe” with surprise and frustration:

Whenever I visit the UK, it surprises me that people talk of Europe as if they weren't part of it. Makes me wanting to defend Europe! [Female, 23, Sweden].

UK students also felt a lack of identification with European identity through historical and cultural differences:

When in America people asked if I was European/where in Europe I was from. I thought it was weird because I only thought of myself as English/British. [Female, England, 18].

Overall, responses highlight closer alignment with country-of-origin identity than European identity, which was felt more abstract, but perhaps expressed more explicitly by UK respondents.

4.1 Tourism experiences and notions of identity

An EU Green Paper (EC, 1995) first posited that, regardless of the absence of any empirical evidence, intra-regional tourism and travel will support a European identity formation. Several EU documents stressed tourism’s theoretical potential for European citizenship, integration and the shaping of European identity and shared common European values. “*Tourism contributes to a better understanding amongst people and helps in the process of shaping the European identity*” (EC, 2006) where tourism indirectly “*helps to strengthen the feeling of European*

citizenship by encouraging contacts and exchanges” (EC, 2010). Despite increased levels of tourism-related mobility, respondents commonly most closely identified with national identity.

Official EU documentation argues tourism facilitates contacts, and exchanges mean “*tourism is one of the most powerful forces paving the way for the realization of a people’s Europe*” and such contacts foster “*a closer mutual awareness among different nations*” (EC, 1991). Here, “*tourism is a vehicle to promote a better knowledge of the cultures and way of life in the member states*” (EC, 1991) as it “*promotes mobility, European integration*” and “*dialogues between peoples and knowledge of each other’s cultures*” thereby helping “*the development of a sense of European citizenship*” (EP, 2007). In essence, tourism “*brings European citizens closer together as they discover and share common European values*” (EC, 2010). Further, the aim is to develop the “*intercultural dimension*” through “*intercultural dialogue*” between tourists and local inhabitants (CoE, 2011).

That tourism may reinforce negative stereotypes is not acknowledged in the documentation. However, some respondents described experiencing discrimination:

Discrimination of Spanish towards British in service and customer treatment outside of historic parks. [Male, 20, England].

Here, intra-European travel reinforced negative preconceptions of British holiday makers reminiscing the culture clash evidenced in host-guest relations.

Also, notions of Scottishness and Scotland were accentuated as data was collected shortly after the Scottish independence referendum of 18th September 2014. This heightened respondents’ reflection on Scottish identity in relation to UK/European identities:

My time spent living and working in France (Paris) for six years made me feel more patriotic (towards Scotland) and proud of my Scottish roots. This was partly because I was constantly confronted with people who did not understand Scotland's situation in the context of the UK. [Female, 29, Scotland].

Whilst national identity and regional attachment may be compatible with European identity, Jung (2008) argued national pride decreases supranational identity. Thus, the independence referendum may have accentuated notions of Scottishness among respondents and reconfigured, or weakened, UK and European identities. This is an interesting juxtaposition given how closely Scottish identity and independence have been tied to a sense of European belonging.

4.2 Significance of cultural and heritage tourism in identity formation

The EU documentation purported that “*transnational cultural tourism products represent common European shared values and heritage*” (EC, 2014) and “*Tourism itself is a creative force*” that forges new cultural experiences, and cultural tourism is key “*for the promotion of economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe*” (CoE, 2011). Cultural tourism is particularly significant to the European project because it represents “*common European shared values and heritage*” (EC, 2014), can “*raise awareness of the value of the cultural heritage of peoples in their diversity*” and notably, “*cultural heritage tourism can help to forge the European identity and develop awareness and respect of the cultural heritage of peoples*” (CoE, 2003). Although it is implicitly assumed shared values and common heritage are accepted by all

Europeans unequivocally, our quantitative findings highlight that travelling, engaging with others, and visiting symbolic places alters personal notions of identity in multiple ways.

Table 3: Summary Response to European Identity - Q19

Reliability Statistics Alpha = (0.758)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Missing
European identity is shaped by the actions and programmes of the European Union institutions.	5	44	92	113	8	5
European identity is shaped by the interactions of European citizens.	5	12	55	157	33	5
Travelling in Europe has brought me closer to the people of the countries I have visited	4	22	67	105	64	5
I consider Europe as a single tourism destination.	59	112	51	32	8	5
We EU citizens share common European values.	13	64	99	77	7	7
Travelling within Europe has convinced me that Europeans share a common heritage and culture	13	87	80	71	11	5
Travelling within Europe makes me feel a citizen of Europe	7	53	91	90	20	6
Travelling outside of Europe makes me feel a citizen of Europe	12	52	93	81	22	7
My European identity is shaped by my interactions with non-European citizens	12	68	112	54	11	10
I appreciate other (non-European) cultures and values.	6	3	32	119	101	6
I seek to discover other (non-European) cultures and values.	6	5	35	102	113	6

As Table 3 shows, most respondents agreed EU identity is shaped by interactions with European citizens and the actions of European institutions, hence acknowledging both cultural and structuralist notions (Favell and Reimer, no date) in European identity.

I speak three European languages: Polish, Spanish, and English. I can't recall specific experience, but it is clear to me that our European identity comes from Christian Religion and Ancient Greece culture (Latin, Democracy, Philosophy) and you can experience that in every European country :-) [Male, 21, Poland].

The findings also suggest a geographical dimension, a notion of distance from “Europe” and how being in Brussels, the heart of Europe, strengthened some respondents’ sense of European identity:

I spent six months in Brussels, and I met people from all over the World, but mostly Europeans. I felt like in Brussels everybody had a chance to become someone and establish themselves as individuals, regardless of the country of origin. [Female, 22, Italy].

Brussels also acted as a simulacrum of Europe/Europeanness where multiple cultures live and work together. Visiting EU political institutions with symbolic image and significance is equivalent to visiting nationally symbolic historic sites (Palmer, 1999).

I went to Brussels last year and visiting the most important European institutions and seeing the multiple cultures who live there, has strongly affected my sense of European identity, making me realise how beautiful is being part of the same community. [Female, 19, Italy].

EU documents frequently refer to Europe’s cultural heritage in creating a shared European identity, reflecting the cultural approach to creating a European identity (Tekiner, 2020a) based on shared values. “*Heritage reveals what it has meant to be a European throughout time. It is a powerful instrument that provides a sense of belonging amongst and between European citizens*” (EC, 2014). EU approaches to tourism policy aim to encourage member states to build a “*feeling... that they are attached to a bigger, European whole*” and simultaneously underline the “*enormous potential for the development of educational and cultural tourism among European cities and regions*” to show “*a heritage at once divided and enriched by its diversity*” (CoE, 2011). In such policies towards tourism “*preservation of the heritage, of the landscape, of the local culture*” (EC, 2001) are key.

Heritage is distinctive and diverse, “*our common wealth – our inheritance from previous generations of Europeans and our legacy for those to come*” (EC, 2014). Heritage “*conceals an important part of the collective memory and European identity, some of whose elements deserve to be protected as part of the heritage*” (CoE, 1990) that promotes intercultural dialogue and respect for others.

Contrary to this narrative, some respondents did not feel travelling across Europe engendered a common European heritage and culture or feelings of world citizenship. Instead, living in different European countries further reinforced regional and/or national identity.

Visiting countries around Europe makes my identity as Scottish stronger. Everyone is interested in Scotland. [Male, 20, Scotland]

It is probably not related to the European identity but to the Mediterranean one. Living and working in Scotland made me realise how different I was culturally from UK and how close I was to people from other Mediterranean countries. [Female, 30 Spain]

Most respondents were neutral (42%) on whether interacting with non-European citizens shapes their European identity, but some felt travel experiences beyond Europe had altered notions of European identity. Here, it was other nationalities' perceptions of them as European first, and their national or regional identity as second, that were noted, further confirming Adams' (2016) assertion that interactions with others may confirm and reaffirm notions of identity:

My last semester in China makes me feel more European because we are not considered German, French, or Spanish but as a European person. [Female, 20, France]

Travelling outside Europe- foreigners view you as European which does make you feel more 'European'. [Female, 23, Scotland]

In America, people are less likely to have travelled to Europe as it is so far away, and they did not seem to consider the UK as Europe as it is not mainland. This is the only time I have felt the need to point myself out as European. [Female, 18, Scotland]

Furthermore, there was self-identification and alignment with European shared values and identity in reaction to 'Others' identities and values. Instances of travel to specific destinations such as Turkey, Egypt or Asian destinations could reinforce notions of shared common European heritage and values. Issues of gender equality and Europe's Christian core were also highlighted:

Going to Turkey made me realise how lucky I am that I was born in a European, Christian family where women are equal with men. [Female, 21, Bulgaria]

Being in Turkey and seeing and experiencing the culture made me feel glad about being European. Truly is still very different, in terms of gender equality and behaviour. [Female, 24, Czech Republic]

Interestingly, most respondents (80%) sought to discover, other, non-European cultures and values, displaying a cultural sensitivity enabling them to study, travel, and work in Europe and beyond. Travel experiences within and outside Europe partly facilitated the creation of this international outlook.

Finally, Table 4 illustrates a consistent awareness among respondents of the perceived benefits of being European when travelling in the EU including not needing a visa for EU travel.

Table 4: Benefits of European national travelling in European Union

Reliability Statistics Alpha = (0.665)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor	Agree	Strongly agree	Missing
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			disagre e			
It is safe	3	18	89	124	29	4
Short travelling distances between destinations	0	9	32	157	62	7
No need for visas	2	1	18	114	127	5
There is a single currency (euro) in most countries	3	21	39	140	58	6
It is affordable	4	39	94	100	23	7
Great culture and environmental variety	2	11	45	135	70	4
Your consumer rights are protected when buying package holidays	2	14	137	92	16	6
Good transport links across countries	3	6	45	161	48	4

Respondents mentioned functional EU benefits associated with freedom of movement and establishment as strengthening their European identity. They identified utilitarian and cultural aspects of European identity, echoing civic rather than cultural aspects of European citizenship (Prutsch, 2017).

Freedom of movement! I moved to Russia, it was a lot of administrative work, I felt restricted and unwelcome. Moving to Scotland was much easier, virtually no barriers. (Female, 23, Germany)

Erasmus= national ID -> meet lot of people from everywhere. Lucky to be EU because travels are easier. (Female, 19, France).

EFA further investigated connections between identity and EU travel. Five components and 14 factors were retained (Table 5) and further analysed using Independent Sample t-Test to investigate any statistically significant differences between the means of two unrelated male and female groups.

Table 5: Factor Analysis of European citizen benefits

KMO Sampling Adequacy	0.782
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	1055.124
Df	171
Sig	0.000

Component	Code	Variable	Factor Loading	Eigen Value factor	Cronbach Alpha
1	19	<i>Respect for non-European culture and values</i>		4.392	0.840
		Appreciation of other (non-European cultures and values	0.849		
		Seek discovery of other (non-European cultures and values	0.840		
2	19	<i>Shared value and culture</i>		1.904	0.682
		I consider Europe as a single tourism destination	0.560		
		We EU citizens share common European values	0.766		
		Travelling within Europe convinced me that European share a common heritage and culture	0.811		
		Travelling within Europe makes me feel a citizen of Europe	0.588		
3	20	<i>Free movement and proximity: Benefits of European national travelling in EU</i>		1.691	0.587
		Short travelling distances between destinations	0.662		
		No need for visas	0.780		
4	19	<i>Strong European identity</i>		1.194	0.682
		Travelling in Europe has brought me closer to the people of the countries I have visited	0.585		
		Travelling outside Europe makes me feel a citizen of Europe	0.701		
		European identify shaped by interactions with non-European citizens	0.841		
5	20	<i>Common travel, protection, and price</i>			
		It is affordable	0.649	1.125	0.458
		Protection of consumer rights	0.655		
		Good transportation network across countries	0.580		

An Independent Sample t-Test was run on eight principal components to determine whether gender impacts on European identity formation and travel benefits. We found a statistically significant difference mean of 90 male = 4.01% vs 172 female = 4.27%; $p=0.015$ for non-European culture and values. This could indicate strong respect for non-European values and culture, particularly among females (Table 6).

Table 6: Independent Sample T-Test of geographical identities and EU citizenship

Variable	Gender	No	Mean	Std dev	t-test	p-value
Respect for non-European culture and values	Male	90	4.0111	0.85781	-2.456	0.015
	Female	172	4.2703	0.78613		
Shared values and culture	Male	90	2.8611	0.83474	-1.432	0.153
	Female	173	3.0145	0.81844		
Free market proximity	Male	91	4.1310	0.60016	-1.453	0.147
	Female	172	4.2471	0.61771		
Strong European identity	Male	90	2.9556	0.86649	-1.469	0.143
	Female	172	3.1163	0.82779		
Common travel protection and price at home	Male	91	3.5421	0.53668	-0.691	0.490
	Female	172	3.5911	0.55124		
Local/Regional/National identity	Male	90	3.2185	1.02716	-2.337	0.020
	Female	168	3.5060	0.92091		
European Global and World citizen	Male	93	3.3486	1.05222	-1.337	0.182
	Female	174	3.4943	0.84311		
Town/Region citizen	Male	90	3.6444	0.74292	-1.690	0.092
	Female	174	3.8305	0.89716		

Respondents associated with location and national identity through travelling within the EU. A statistically significant difference was found of mean 90 male = 3.22 vs 168 female = 3.51; $p=0.020$. Through such travel, respondents associated with different identities. A statistically significant different mean of 90 male = 3.64 vs female 174 = 3.83; $p=0.092$ was found at Town and European citizenship. This result could be considered weak due to being at the upper end of 10% significance, but it could also mean respondents, mostly female, felt town and European citizenship was acquired through travel. Thus, European identity was confirmed with national identity making it not of paramount importance.

Although respondents associated with EU identity when travelling outside the EU (see Table 5), we found no statistically significant difference between males and females (mean of 90 male = 2.86 vs 173 female = 3.01, $p>0.05$) (see Table 6). The male mean was below the three-point average. This may mean EU identity is equally significant for males and females travelling outside EU, and contrasts with previous studies suggesting males are more likely to display European identity than females (Jung, 2008), and higher EU support.

Of statistical insignificance ($p>0.05$) were five more principal components: shared values and culture; free market proximity; strong European identity; price at home, and European, Global and World citizen (see Table 6) with 'common travel, protection and price at home' ($p=0.490$) the highest statistically insignificant difference. Further statistical analysis of results thus demonstrated respondents' respect and interest for non-European culture and values, and stronger local regional and national identity rather than European or global identities. Overall, a cleavage is evident between the official narrative's support for tourism's potential for identity building and the respondents' actual experiences.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study compared the top-down processes of European identity formation against bottom-up processes through which young Europeans made sense of their identity. Documentary analysis reveals an overwhelmingly positive EU view of tourism's potential to help forge European identity, with only one document (CEC, 1995) acknowledging some caution. Much documentation supports developing cultural heritage tourism products and experiences that rely on past heritage to forge European identity and common, shared European values. Cross-border cultural exchanges and dialogue, between European hosts and guests is claimed to further reinforce 'Unity in Diversity'. Transnational experiences focusing on past heritage, whether educational or leisure-related, will help, so the rhetorical aspirations and assertions go, forge individual identification with a collective European identity. However, respondents presented a more complex picture of how travel influences identity formation.

Favell and Reimer (no date) claim European identity formation occurs through 'structuralist' or 'top-down' orientations from core European values, and 'cultural' or 'bottom-up' orientation from association with others' commonalities in Europe. Our findings confirm cultural and structuralist orientations shaping regional, national, and European identities. Moreover, where respondents acknowledged European identity, it complemented individual, regional, and national identities, confirming literature noting the elusive and value-based nature of European identity (Clycq, 2021; Eurobarometer, 2021). A dichotomy of perception of identity was evident between some UK and European students regarding acknowledgment of a European identity. These findings align with Leith, Sim, van der Zwet and Boyle's (2019) assertion that UK nationals perceive European identity as ethnic rather than cultural, thereby challenging their British or regional identities. Additionally, the Scottish independence referendum appeared to increase consideration of regional, national, and European identities.

Periods spent travelling altered respondents' sense of national, regional, and European identities (Adams, 2016). Europe was highly important in respondents' daily lives; through travelling, living, studying, and working in Europe. The data indicated highly cosmopolitan outlooks partly fuelled by international travel. Travel appeared to reinforce notions of identity - from interactions with other Europeans but mainly with other non-European cultures. These findings support Morin's notion (1987, cited in Verstraete, 2002) that "one feels European in places outside of Europe" although respondents did not discuss feeling at home elsewhere in Europe. Our findings confirm that all mobility experience (short-term study abroad, work, and travel) alters perceptions of identity, and echo Bruter's (2004) notion that European integration is felt in life within and without the European Union. Such experiences cumulatively reinforce notions of European and national or regional identities (us versus them), so travel can form/reform many individual identities depending on individual experiences and circumstances (Yang et al., 2020).

The findings also mirrored literature regarding how heritage symbols can anchor identity (Palmer, 1999). The EU documentation evidenced attempts at mythmaking and identifying signs of European identity through the Cultural Routes initiatives. However, respondents did not acknowledge specific tourism experiences, cultural, heritage or otherwise as identity-defining, displaying instead cognitive identification with civic elements of European identity (European citizenship, study exchange programmes, freedom of movement). Some respondents also

highlighted the metonymic significance of political symbols and signs such as visiting Brussels and its formal institutions as affirming European identity, but not for constructs of shared heritage and past (cf. Pykre, 2020). These findings also confirm assertions that European citizenship and civic aspects of European identity are more significant than cultural identifiers such as peace, harmony, and heritage (Leith et al., 2019; Shorrocks and de Geus, 2019; Pykre, 2020).

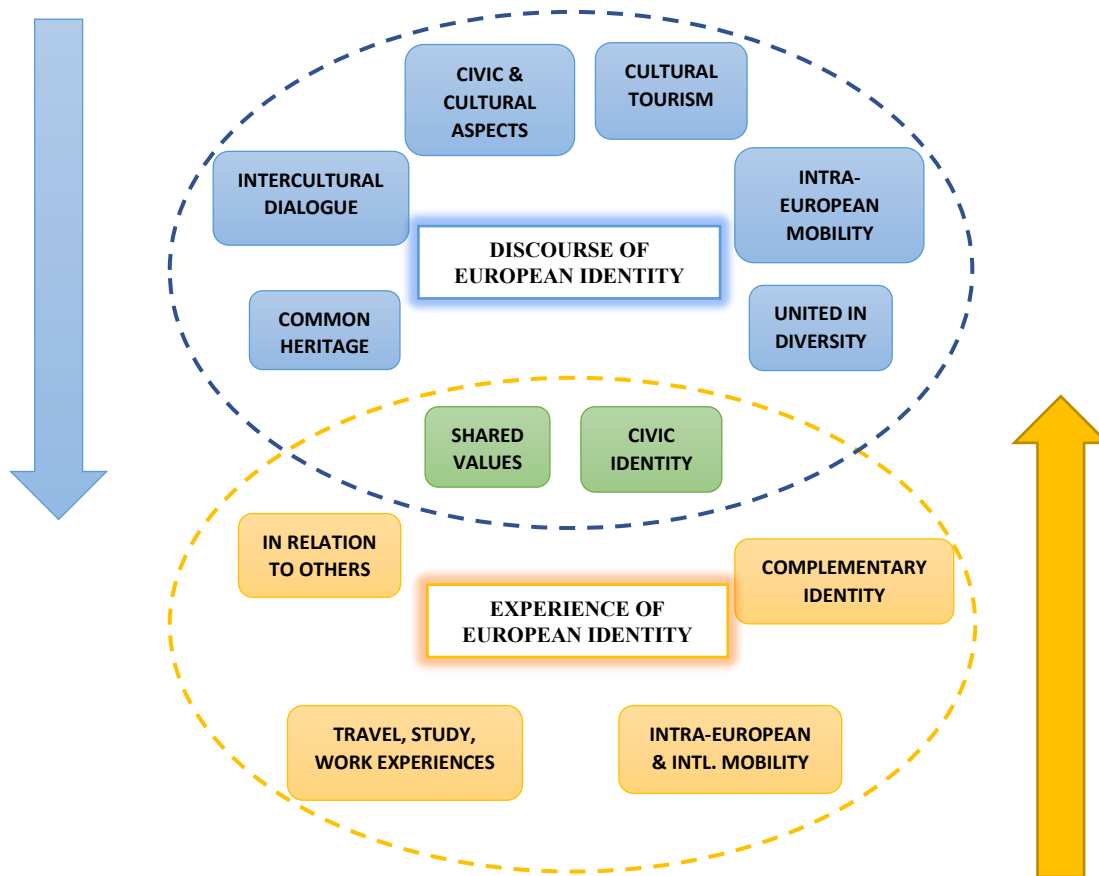


Figure 2: Synthesis of Key Findings

Figure 2 synthesizes the key findings. These suggest that unlike the national and regional levels where heritage tourism has been extensively promoted for identity and nation building processes (Naef, 2016), identity building at supranational levels is more complex. The focus in recent years on promoting common heritage and culture may have been somewhat misconstrued. We agree with Prutsch (2017) that gazing to the past to identify commonalities risks dividing rather than uniting Europeans. Focusing on heritage tourism for identification with the past relies on an official narrative of events and acceptance of singular historic truths, which is absent at the European level where identity is defined in relation to another or ‘others’ that are fluid and subject to change. As member states are at different stages of acknowledging their past and utilise narratives of national mythmaking and amnesia to support national identity building, Sierp (2020) highlights how the EU is memorializing pasts such as the Holocaust but remains silent regarding Europe’s past imperialism and colonialism.

As Palmer (1999) claimed, heritage tourism is endemically removed from present and future, and its deployment at the EU level to support narratives of a shared past risks pulling people apart rather than drawing them together in a common, contemporary, co-constructed EU identity. The study findings also contribute to debates surrounding the problematic essentialisations surrounding some definitions of heritage and culture, and the need to recast these as processes requiring re-evaluation, re-interpretation and revision to remain relevant in the present and future (Turunen, 2020).

Moreover, notions of shared European heritage can be problematic given inward migration from other world regions. A European identity based on specific historical events, disengages those who may be new or second-generation Europeans, and possibly unable to identify themselves in a European project that selectively memorialises the past. Consequently, significant sections of the European population could feel excluded and distant from the European institutions, and consequently fail to engage with or support the European project. This is potentially a missed opportunity from a policy perspective as European identity can become a collective culture encompassing diversity in ways that national identities often fail to achieve. Evidence from Agirdag, Phalet and van Houtte, (2016) and Clycq (2021)'s studies show immigrant children and second and third generation Europeans, identify stronger with European than national identity. Considering the volumes of recent inward migration from the Middle East, north Africa, and Asia, and the associated challenges of integration, European identity can be a unifying common ground where different ethnic groups can meet despite national differences (Agirdag et al., 2016).

Although this contrasts with literature on heritage tourism and national identity, it resonates with discourses that highlight the complex and contested nature of heritage. Our findings also confirm Prutsch's (2017, p36) assertion that "national identities cannot serve as one-to-one blueprints for the process of trans or supranational community formation." If mobility experiences of study exchanges and associated travel create instances where European identity can be developed organically, should the emphasis on heritage tourism to support supranational identity building be reconsidered given that respondents did not mention any specific heritage experiences altering their notions of identity? Would perhaps a more innovative approach be to design tourism experiences and products that are bottom-up and co-created by European citizens to help define a European identity expressed through the contemporary, lived experiences of all Europeans? Future research could explore whether such experiences are more meaningful in establishing what it means to be European in the 21st century.

Travelling outside Europe and being described as European by others appeared common incidents where respondents reflected upon European identity and the benefits of European citizenship. If the policy objective is to reinforce the sense of European identity, then travelling outside Europe and engaging in actions of global citizenship could do more to build a sense of shared European identity, encourage advocacy of EU purposes and active participation in shaping European institutions, as it shifts the perspective away from intra-European differences (cultural) towards European citizenship benefits (civic), which our respondents widely acknowledged.

The study focused primarily on highly mobile young, European, and well-educated individuals studying in a UK university. Future research could capture how young Europeans in other

countries perceive identities, particularly young Europeans who travel less or are not University educated. It may also consider the significance of inter-generational characteristics in identity formation and how first, second or third generation Europeans perceive their identities develop through holiday travel.

Given the significance of heritage and cultural tourism initiatives in EU documentation, including a specific question or questions in our questionnaire on heritage visits and experiences may have yielded further insights into our respondents' engagement with heritage tourism. Nonetheless, the open question relating to identity in general rather than European identity only, generated rich responses. Future studies could explicitly study how young Europeans relate to heritage initiatives such as the Cultural Routes and the European Heritage Label, and whether visiting cultural sites leads to increased understanding of European cultural diversity, increased intercultural dialogue, and greater sense of belonging to the European Union (Prutsch, 2017). The effect of gender and identification with European or other identities could be studied further within the context of heritage tourism, as our study findings contradicted previous studies (Jung, 2008).

Our study was exploratory and followed a convergent parallel design; future studies could use confirmatory and sequential designs (Cresswell and Plano-Clark, 2011) to explore connections between using heritage sites and commemorative events to build national and regional identities; whether consuming or participating in such experiences impacts on visitors' individual notions of identity and to undertake data mixing in earlier stages.

The study findings captured a unique time-context sensitive snapshot of European students visiting, living, and studying in a UK university at a time of significant change in European and UK politics. The findings uncovered how differently UK and European students perceive European identity and may offer some additional insight in interpreting the Brexit referendum result. They reassert that European identity is not fixed but fluid and redefined. Political events such as the UK's exit from the EU, the war in Ukraine and national politics such as the rise of Zemmour in France, become instances where allegiances are re-evaluated, reaffirmed or rejected that change the European project's direction of travel. Future research could identify their significance for tourism and travel mobilities, shared values and heritage, European Identity, Us and Others, within a British and wider European context.

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