Seminari di Economia
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Bilateral Tourism Trade and Cultural Proximity

Abstract Cultural proximity has been found to be beneficial to international trade by reducing barriers to international exchange. In the empirical literature, cultural proximity has traditionally been proxied by variables such as common language, colonial links, immigration, religion and ethnicity and it has been shown to be trade enhancing by reducing the transaction cost of trade. Disdier et al. (2009) and Felbermayr and Toubal, (2009) proposes that these above measures of cultural proximity can be limited in that they are either unobservable or are fixed over time. In this context Disdier et al. (2009) proposed new measures of cultural proximity which are time variant and are available for a wide range of countries. In their paper they use the UNESCO list of core and cultural goods to create a measure cultural proximity. They used variables such as cultural heritage, import of books, newspapers period, printed matter, recorded media, visual arts and audivision media to quantity the link between cultural exchange and trade between countries. Their findings confirm that these variables are positive and significant in explaining bilateral trade. This paper, proposes to test the effect of cultural proximity as defined by Disdier et al. 2009 on bilateral tourism flows among European countries. Cultural proximity has been found to be an important determinant of tourism flows in the tourism literature in that the stock of culture at the destination is positively related to the destination image and competitiveness. However, there is very little empirical evidence on the extent to which cultural proximity is in fact influencing demand for a destination. This paper seeks to address this gap by developing a bilateral tourism trade model which will be empirically tested using the dynamic panel data technique. It is expected that the result will shed more lights on the extent to which tourism are influence by cultural proximity when travelling to a destination.

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