

Proposing a Model for Cultural Tourism: A Comparative Management Study

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Abstract

The management of cultural tourist flows is crucial for maximizing the economic and social benefits of cultural tourism while preserving heritage. This research compares management practices from Japan, Italy, and Morocco to identify similarities and differences and transfer know-how to improve the efficiency and sustainability of cultural tourism in Romania. The methodology is based on comparative management principles, analysing the cultural context, identifying and adapting good practices, and transferring managerial know-how through selected case studies. Thus, these case studies include integrating contemporary art into natural landscapes, combining cultural heritage with culinary experiences and picturesque landscapes, and focusing on urban regeneration and heritage conservation. The results of our research highlight various approaches to managing cultural tourist flows, emphasizing heritage conservation and creating authentic experiences, and propose a conceptual model that can be replicated in different cultural-tourism contexts, showcasing similarities and differences in managerial approaches and offering suggestions for improving cultural tourism management at national and regional/local levels. The originality of our paper lies in integrating a conceptual model for the comparative management of cultural tourist flows, applicable in various cultural contexts, and emphasizing an integrated and collaborative approach.

Keywords: Cultural tourism management, tourist flows, comparative analysis, good practices, sustainability.

JEL classification: L83, Z32, Q01.

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1. Introduction

The management of cultural tourist flows, encompassing the planning, organization, and control of tourism activities, is essential for maximizing the economic and social benefits of cultural tourism, while providing a quality

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experience to visitors and protecting both tangible and intangible cultural resources. A crucial aspect of effective management of cultural tourist flows is the analysis of tourism demand and supply. Managers need to understand the profile and motivations of cultural tourists to develop products and services that meet their expectations. Collaboration with local authorities, communities, and other stakeholders is vital to create an attractive, authentic, and sustainable tourism offer. The management of cultural tourist flows also involves the implementation of effective marketing strategies that promote cultural destinations and attract visitors, while avoiding overcrowding and degradation of heritage sites. Monitoring and assessing the impact of tourism on cultural heritage and local communities are necessary to identify problems and take appropriate measures.

The objective of this paper is to compare and analyse the management of cultural tourist flows in three distinct cultural settings: Japan, Italy, and Morocco. Based on this analysis, we propose a conceptual model capable of ensuring the transfer of know-how and best practices to improve the efficiency and sustainability of cultural tourism in different contexts. By understanding cultural influences and successful strategies from other countries, tourist destinations can develop more informed policies and practices, maximizing economic and social benefits while protecting cultural heritage and the environment.

The structure of the paper is as follows: after this Introduction, we continue with a review of the existing literature, followed by the methodology section. Next, we present the case studies and propose a conceptual model for the comparative management of cultural tourist flows, applying this model to cultural tourism in Romania. The conclusions summarize the main findings, the utility and limitations of the research, and provide recommendations in the field.

2. Literature review

The management of cultural tourist flows is a complex domain that necessitates a multidisciplinary and integrated approach. Despite the richness and diversity of the literature, it suffers from a lack of systematization. Consequently, empirical analyses on this topic address challenges and opportunities at both the level of major attractions, such as urban centres or individual tourist sites, and broader aspects related to tourism developments, territorial planning, or regional development, making it difficult to propose a universally accepted set of directions and solutions.

For instance, in analyzing the management of tourist flows at the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral (Spain), Santos & Pena Cabrera (2014) emphasize the importance of understanding carrying capacity and implementing measures to avoid overcrowding. They highlight the need for rigorous planning and continuous monitoring to protect cultural heritage while providing a quality experience for visitors. From a broader perspective, Palmi et al. (2021) propose a sustainable management model for thematic cultural routes, such as the Francigena route in the Apulia region (Italy). They demonstrate that using information and communication

technologies to develop new cultural services and diversifying the cultural offer can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism management. Exploring the principles of sustainable tourism and its impact on local communities, Bramwell & Lane (2012) underscore the importance of respecting local culture and the environment while promoting the economic and social benefits of cultural tourism (Foris et al., 2020). Choi & Murray (2010) propose a strategic management model that combines Lean techniques to enhance the efficiency and productivity of operational processes in tourist destinations. Finally, Lozano-Oyola et al. (2012) suggest that careful planning and active involvement of local communities are essential for the long-term, sustainable success of cultural destinations.

Three fundamental principles of comprehensive comparative management of cultural tourism flows are highlighted: (1) Analysis of the cultural tourism context; (2) Identification and adaptation of good practices; and (3) Transfer of managerial know-how. These principles serve as both milestones and stages in practical implementation. Clarifying the concepts, definitions, and subtypes of cultural tourism is essential for understanding the cultural context for tourism development (Orel Frank & Medaric, 2019). Richards (2018), McKercher (2009) and McKercher & du Cros (2002) emphasize the need for a detailed analysis of the cultural context to develop effective strategies, providing insights into how the context influences tourist experiences. Walker et al. (2024) and Fen Wei (2020) carefully examine the identification and adaptation of good practices, exploring sustainable practices in tourism and analysing case studies on the implementation of these practices in various contexts, meanwhile Mihalic (2024) highlights the importance of adapting good practices to meet current challenges.

The transfer of managerial know-how involves exploring the mechanisms and channels of knowledge transfer in tourism, underscoring their importance for innovation and competitiveness (Shaw & Williams, 2009; Otowicz et al., 2022). Examples of knowledge transfer between countries and regions can successfully outline future directions of action (De Martino et al., 2017).

The literature on this topic in the context of Romania is also informative. Analysing the development strategies for various forms of Romanian tourism, Tigu et al. (2013, 2014) argue that Romanian tourism is adjusting to the requirements of the international market during a period of transition and transformation. They also suggest that the cultural tourism sub-sector, by intelligently capitalizing on the potential of cultural heritage, can bring significant benefits to local communities (Tigu et al., 2014; Badulescu et al., 2024). From a perspective closer to the geography of tourism and regional planning, several contributions refer to tourism promotion strategies for attractions with exceptional cultural-historical heritage, such as the Sighișoara fortress (Bratu, 2020), the only inhabited fortress in Romania, or important urban centres known for cultural events and festivals, such as Cluj Napoca (Oprea, 2020) and Oradea (Badulescu et al., 2022). Finally, analysing the role of local traditions and customs in promoting sustainable tourism in picturesque ethnographic and natural areas such as Mărginimea Sibiului, Pișcociu (Pandelescu

(2021) highlights the importance of involving local communities in the development and management of cultural tourism.

3. Research methodology

This paper utilizes the advancements and methodologies of comparative management, which examines managerial processes and relationships within organizations across diverse national cultural contexts. The goal is to identify and analyze managerial similarities and differences, thereby facilitating the international transfer of know-how and enhancing organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Nicolescu, 2006; Burdus, 2017; Popa et al., 2020). Our analysis is grounded in three core principles of comparative management: 1. Cultural Context Analysis: Understanding the influence of cultural factors on managerial practices is crucial, stressing the importance of recognizing how cultural contexts shape management styles and decisions. 2. Identification and Adaptation of Good Practices: Comparative management enables the identification of effective practices from various countries and their adaptation to local contexts, evaluating and integrating successful strategies to enhance management practices. 3. Transfer of Managerial Know-How: Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences between managers from different countries can lead to improved managerial practices, underlining the significance of cross-cultural learning and the dissemination of innovative management techniques.

4. Case study analysis and development of a management model

4.1 Selection and presentation of three case studies

The literature extensively documents the Japanese government's efforts to promote cultural tourism through foundational facilities like art galleries and museums, highlighting their impact on visitors and local residents (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2009). Recent trends in Japanese cultural tourism, including travel campaigns and art festivals, attract both domestic and international tourists (Yagasaki, 2024; Mari Fujita, 2018). In Italy, Santoro et al. (2024) provide a comprehensive analysis of cultural tourism, proposing definitions and indicators for measuring this phenomenon and emphasizing the importance of integrated data for understanding tourism dynamics. Petrei et al. (2020) examine the relationship between cultural tourism and territory in Italy, offering policymakers tools to understand territorial dynamics and identify optimal local development policies. In Morocco, the literature includes overviews of tourism, encompassing cultural and natural attractions, and government policies promoting cultural tourism (Almeida-García & Chahine, 2023), as well as specific analyses of urban regeneration strategies focused on cultural heritage conservation and sustainable socio-economic development (Steenbruggen et al., 2019).

Based on these contributions, the table below presents a comparative analysis of three international experiences in managing cultural tourism flows: Japan,

Italy, and Morocco. This analysis will inform the development of a theoretical model to improve the management of cultural tourist flows, ensuring the transfer of best practices and enhancing sustainability in various cultural contexts.

**Management of cultural tourism in three emblematic attractions:
Case studies of Japan, Italy, and Morocco**

Table 1

1. Japan - Naoshima and Teshima Art Islands	2. Italy – Tuscany	3. Morocco - Marrakech and Fez
<p>Naoshima is renowned for its contemporary art museums, such as the Chichu Art Museum and Benesse House, which integrate art into the natural landscape. The artworks are displayed in ways that interact with natural light and the surrounding environment.</p> <p>Teshima is home to the Teshima Art Museum, a unique space, a minimalist structure that combines innovative architecture with contemporary art, blending into the island's landscape. The museum houses a single art installation, with the visitor experience deeply influenced by the natural environment.</p> <p>The Setouchi Triennale contemporary art festival takes place on several islands in the Seto Inland Sea, including Naoshima and Teshima, transforming the island landscapes into open-air art galleries.</p> <p>These islands offer an immersive cultural experience, where visitors can explore art in a tranquil natural setting.</p>	<p>Tuscany is known for its picturesque landscapes, medieval towns and rich cultural heritage, offering a complete and diverse experience. The region also offers authentic culinary experiences, such as wine tastings in local vineyards and traditional cooking classes.</p> <p>The Uffizi Gallery in Florence is one of the most famous and the Piazza del Duomo, which includes the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, the Baptistery and Giotto's Campanile, is an example of the conservation of cultural heritage and the management of tourist flows in a historic urban space.</p> <p>The UNESCO site, Val d'Orcia is an example of a rural landscape that combines the beauty of landscapes and vineyards with cultural history, and San Gimignano - famous for its medieval towers, has managed to preserve historical authenticity and effectively manage tourist flows.</p>	<p>Marrakech is a vibrant city with a mix of ancient traditions and modern influences, known for its bustling markets, an authentic experience of local life such as Jemaa el-Fnaa, and impressive Islamic architecture, including the Bahia Palace, the Koutoubia Mosque, and the Majorelle Gardens. The Bahia Palace is a major tourist attraction that combines Moroccan history and culture. Managing this site involves preserving its heritage and controlling tourist flows.</p> <p>The Medina of Fez, a UNESCO site, is a maze of narrow streets and traditional markets, an example of preserving cultural heritage and managing a historic urban space to attract tourists.</p> <p>Al Quaraouiyine University: Considered the oldest university in the world, it attracts tourists interested in Islamic history and culture. Managing tourist flows here involves protecting its educational and cultural heritage.</p>

Sources: (Note.com, 2024), (Mari Fujita, 2018), (Gori, et al., 2021), (Kawashima & Ferilli, 2024), (Maniou, et al., 2022), (Boussaa & Madandola, 2024), (Bigio, 2010)

4.2 Comparative analysis of management practices and policies

Japan emphasizes the integration of contemporary art into natural landscapes, promoting cultural tourism through foundational facilities such as museums and art galleries. This approach offers a serene and contemplative experience, fostering a profound connection between art and nature. These initiatives not only attract tourists but also promote environmental conservation and respect for natural landscapes. Government efforts are crucial to the success of these initiatives.

In contrast, Italy, particularly the Tuscany region, combines cultural heritage with culinary experiences and natural landscapes, offering a comprehensive and diversified cultural tourism experience. This holistic approach systematically utilizes official data and indicators to measure and analyze cultural tourism, facilitating informed planning and development of cultural tourism.

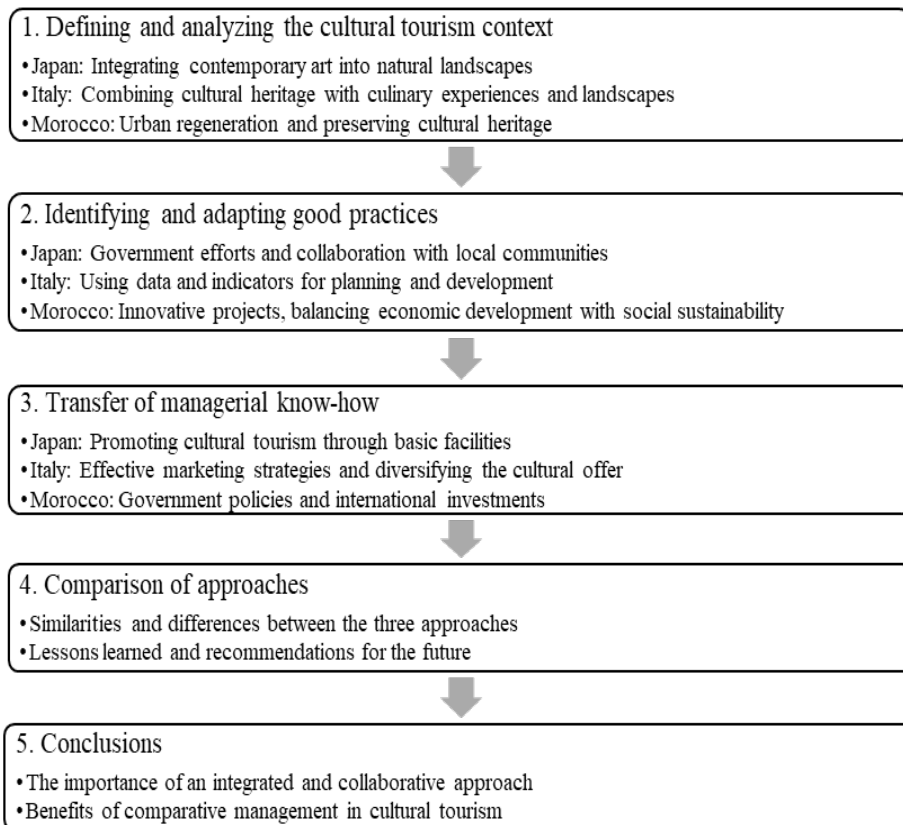
Morocco offers a rich and dynamic cultural experience, blending ancient traditions with modern influences. Initiatives in urban regeneration and cultural heritage preservation feature innovative projects that balance economic development with social sustainability. Government policies and international investments are pivotal in promoting cultural tourism.

It is important to note that the above generalizations may overlook methodological and operational inconsistencies inherent in country-level analyses. Each destination possesses unique strengths and provides distinct experiences tailored to the diverse preferences of cultural tourists. National and regional specificities further differentiate these destinations in the global landscape of cultural tourism offerings.

4.3 Proposing a model for cultural tourism management

By applying the principles of comparative management, each destination can learn from the experiences of others to enhance the management of cultural tourist flows, achieving more sustainable and effective outcomes.

Based on this premise, we have developed a conceptual model, depicted in the flowchart below (Figure 1), for a comparative approach to managing cultural tourist flows, specifically referencing the cases of Japan, Italy, and Morocco. This model highlights the fundamental principles of comparative management and their application across various cultural contexts. The proposed conceptual model is easily replicable in other cultural tourism contexts, serving both to illustrate the similarities and differences in managerial approaches and as a practical guide for the creative and adapted application of these principles and experiences to specific cultural tourism contexts (countries/regions/places) that are less represented in the literature or in the practice of tourism managers.



**Figure 1. Conceptual model for comparative management of cultural tourist flows.
Case studies - Japan, Italy and Morocco**

5. Insights for Romania from international practices

Building on the literature, national experiences, and comparative analyses of international practices, we can derive valuable lessons to enhance the promotion and management of cultural tourism in Romania. These lessons can be categorized into two main areas: national-level strategies and planning, and regional or local-level initiatives, including microeconomic aspects within specific cultural-tourist attractions or individualized tourist enterprises (Figure 2).

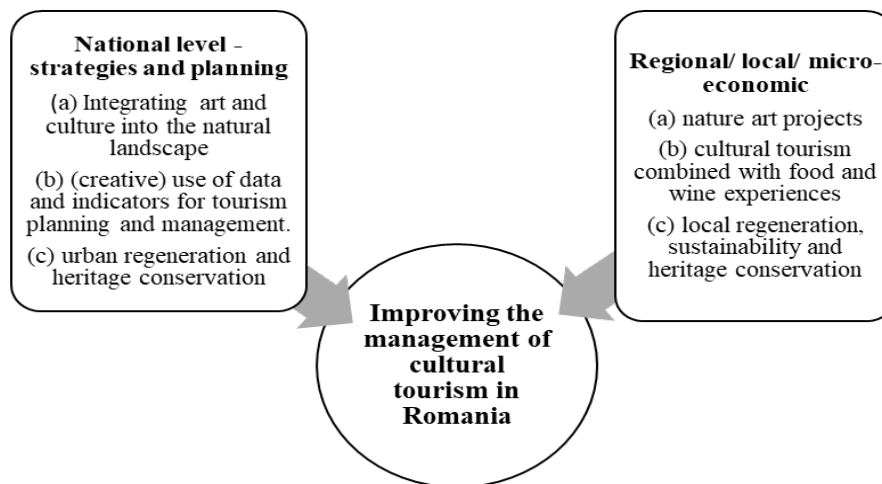


Figure 2. Proposed model for enhancing cultural tourism management in Romania: Insights from comparative analysis

At the national level, one key direction is (a) the integration of art and culture into natural landscapes. Our analyses have shown that Japan successfully integrates contemporary art into natural settings to create unique tourist experiences (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2009). Similarly, Romania could develop projects in its distinctive natural areas, such as the Danube Delta or the Carpathian Mountains, to attract tourists interested in the symbiosis of art and nature. Some examples include:

- Apuseni Mountains: Țara Moșilor, known for its picturesque landscapes and local traditions, could integrate nature art projects, such as sculptures and art installations in the mountain landscapes;
- Bucegi Mountains: The Bucegi Plateau, with its impressive landscapes and relatively easy accessibility, this area could be ideal for outdoor art projects and cultural events. Also, the unique rock formations - Sphinx and Babele could be integrated into art projects that highlight local legends and myths;
- Retezat, Parâng and Făgăraș Mountains, with their spectacular landscapes and rich biodiversity, could host art and culture projects that promote nature conservation and local traditions, including along the spectacular Transfăgărașan or Transalpina mountain roads - unique art installations and cultural events that would attract tourists and highlight the natural landscapes.

First steps were taken by defining the National Strategy of Romania for Tourism Development, for different planning periods (Ministerul Antreprenoriatului și Turismului/Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism, 2024), but more insistent and targeted efforts are certainly needed in this regard. On the other hand, we can also refer to (b) the (creative) use of data and indicators for tourism planning and management. We found that Italy uses official data and indicators to measure and analyze cultural tourism (Istituto Nazionale de Statistica, 2023), (Santoro, et al.,

2024), subsequently developing successful strategies at national or regional level (see the case of Tuscany which combines cultural heritage with culinary experiences and natural landscapes, using effective marketing strategies to attract tourists). Romania could implement a similar system to monitor tourist flows and develop effective marketing and cultural heritage conservation strategies (Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism, 2024), (European Commission. EU Tourism Platform, 2024). Finally, another managerial direction that can be successfully implemented at the macroeconomic level is (c) Urban regeneration and heritage conservation, starting from the experiences of Morocco, which emphasizes urban regeneration under the conditions of cultural heritage conservation. Cities such as Sibiu, Braşov, Sighişoara or Suceava and adjacent regions (Southern Transylvania or Bucovina etc.) could benefit from urban regeneration projects that balance economic development with the conservation of historical heritage (Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism, 2024), (European Commission. EU Tourism Platform, 2024).

At the regional/tourist attraction level, we can suggest several areas with exceptional natural and cultural heritage, where businesses and communities can learn from the mentioned examples. For example, in the Danube Delta, inspired by the Japanese model, economic operators and non-governmental organizations could develop art projects in nature, to attract tourists and promote environmental conservation. Another suggestion could target sub-regions in Transylvania (for example the Târnava Valley) where, following the Tuscany model, cultural tourism could be combined with culinary and wine experiences, promoting the region as a holistic destination for tourists. Similarly, in south-eastern Romania, the distinctive landscape of the Dobrogea Mountains and the scenic Danube Delta, coupled with the ruins of Greek fortresses and the region's renowned culinary and wine attractions, could provide a rich and diverse cultural tourism experience. Finally, another proposal would be the Maramureş area, or cities with recognized tourist potential - Oradea, Sibiu, Braşov, Târgovişte, Curtea de Argeş or Târgu Jiu, etc. The creative integration and adaptation of internationally proven successful strategies could give impetus to urban regeneration and heritage conservation strategies, to protect and capitalize on local traditions and architecture, or unique objectives of international interest (for example, Brâncuşi Sculptural Ensemble). We consider applying these lessons, Romania can develop sustainable and attractive cultural tourism, beneficial for tourists, local communities and small businesses alike.

6. Conclusions

This research compares and analyzes management practices in Japan, Italy, and Morocco across three cultural tourism contexts: art and nature, landscapes, history and gastronomy, and urban historical settings. The novelty lies in integrating a conceptual model for comparative management of cultural tourist flows, applicable in various contexts meanwhile the practical and theoretical utility is demonstrated by identifying good practices and effective strategies adaptable to other destinations, including Romania, contributing to the literature by providing a comparative

framework of three case studies, highlighting the importance of an integrated and collaborative approach in managing cultural tourism flows.

However, the research also has limitations. The limited number of case studies may reduce the generalizability of the conclusions. Also, the selection of countries/contexts analysed has a certain degree of subjectivity, and the available data may implicitly affect the overall image.

In the future, we intend to extend the research to other tourist destinations with innovative practices in cultural tourism management. We also plan to conduct a more detailed analysis of the impact of cultural tourism on local communities and the environment, and to explore how continuous monitoring and evaluation systems of tourist flows can contribute to developing sustainable and efficient strategies tailored to each destination's specifics.

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