

EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE IN SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPECTS FOR ITS ADAPTATION IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: The article examines European approaches to the sustainable development of cultural tourism and identifies opportunities for adapting successful management practices to the Ukrainian context. The relevance of the research is determined by the growing importance of cultural tourism as one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry and by the need to balance tourism development with the preservation of cultural heritage. Particular attention is paid to the challenges faced by Ukraine in the context of post-war recovery and European integration, which require the implementation of effective institutional, financial and organisational mechanisms for sustainable tourism management. The object of the research is cultural tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon and a sphere of management within the framework of sustainable development. The study aims to systematise European experience in sustainable cultural tourism development and formulate practical recommendations for its implementation in Ukraine. The research is based on systems analysis, comparative analysis, monographic and empirical methods using data from international organisations, European policy documents and Ukrainian statistical sources. The paper analyses the cultural tourism management models implemented in France, Spain, Austria and the Czech Republic, highlighting their institutional structures, financing mechanisms, digital solutions, heritage conservation approaches and community participation practices. The study identifies the principal European instruments supporting sustainable cultural tourism, including thematic cultural routes, certification systems, public-private partnerships, digitalisation of cultural heritage and European funding programmes. The research demonstrates that Ukraine possesses significant cultural tourism potential but faces considerable challenges related to damaged infrastructure, fragmented regulatory frameworks and limited financial resources. The implementation of these measures will contribute to preserving cultural heritage, increasing the competitiveness of Ukraine's tourism sector, promoting regional development and facilitating the country's integration into the European cultural and tourism space in accordance with sustainable development principles.

Keywords: sustainable cultural tourism; cultural heritage; European Union; tourism management; sustainable development; cultural tourism; European integration; tourism destinations; cultural routes; Ukraine.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the leading sectors of the global economy, and cultural tourism is its fastest-growing segment. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), approximately 40% of all tourist trips worldwide are motivated by cultural interests [1]. At the same time, intensive use of architectural monuments, museum objects, traditional cultures and intangible heritage leads to their degradation, overcrowding and loss of authenticity.

The concept of sustainable tourism, enshrined in Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 8, 11 and 17), envisages the harmonisation of economic, environmental and socio-cultural interests [2]. Its practical implementation in the tourism sector requires the development of systemic management, financing and regulatory mechanisms.

For Ukraine – a country endowed with rich cultural and natural-cultural heritage potential yet engaged in recovery from large-scale armed aggression – the question of sustainable cultural tourism development is of strategic importance. Studying and adapting best European practices is an essential component of the country's European integration course.

2. Object and Subject of Research

The object of research is cultural tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon and sphere of managerial activity in the context of sustainable development.

The subject of research encompasses the organisational-economic mechanisms, regulatory instruments and management practices of sustainable cultural tourism development in EU member states and the prospects for their adaptation in Ukraine.

3. Target of Research

The aim of the study is to systematise and critically analyse European approaches to sustainable cultural tourism development and to formulate evidence-based recommendations for their adaptation to Ukrainian conditions.

4. Literature Analysis

The theoretical foundations of sustainable tourism were laid by Butler, who proposed a model of the tourist destination life cycle [3]. The concept of "sustainable cultural tourism" was systematised in the works of Richards and McKercher & Du Cros, which emphasise the need to integrate heritage conservation principles with the commercial attractiveness of destinations [4, 5].

The study by Matviichuk L. et al. substantiates approaches to the development of tourist destinations in Ukraine under wartime conditions based on the principles of glocalisation, which combine global sustainable development trends with local resources and community needs. The authors analyse the state of Ukraine's tourism industry and propose directions for developing safe tourist destinations, digitalisation, domestic, memorial and war tourism to support the sector during the war and its post-war recovery [6].

The article by Melnyk I., Antonenko I. and Vohulkin D. examines European experience in sustainable tourism development and the possibilities of its implementation in Ukraine. The authors analyse the main directions of sustainable development in tourism – ecologisation, digitalisation, community engagement, rational resource use and climate change adaptation – and assess the prospects for applying these practices to the recovery and development of tourism in Ukraine in the context of war and European integration [7].

Horina H.'s study analyses strategic approaches and management practices in sustainable tourism development proposed by international tourism organisations and associations. The research identifies key directions for ensuring sustainable tourism development, including resource efficiency, environmental conservation, support for the socio-cultural authenticity of communities and provision of long-term socio-economic benefits for all stakeholders [8].

Duha V.'s article investigates the development features of agritourism and identifies prospects for its development in Ukraine in light of European experience and European integration processes. The authors analyse the role of agritourism in rural development, substantiate the need to harmonise Ukrainian standards and legislation with EU norms, and propose directions for supporting agritourism enterprises to enhance sectoral competitiveness [9].

Kudinova I. and Samsonova V. analyse current trends in rural green tourism development in EU member states and the possibilities of their adaptation in Ukraine. The authors examine successful European practices of state support, infrastructure development and sustainable tourism, and identify prospects for Ukrainian rural tourism development under conditions of European integration and wartime challenges [10].

Practical aspects of cultural destination management in the EU are reflected in Council of Europe documents, notably the Faro Convention of 2005 [11] and UNWTO reports [13]. Of particular relevance is the analysis of specific heritage management cases – the Council of Europe Cultural Routes programme, the French Label Patrimoine system and the Austrian Weltkultur management model.

5. Research Methods

A set of general scientific and specialised methods was employed in the study. The systems analysis method was applied to examine cultural tourism management mechanisms in EU member states. Comparative analysis allowed the identification of commonalities and differences among the models of various countries. The monographic method was used to study individual cases of successful destinations. The empirical base comprised statistical data from UNWTO, EUROSTAT and the State Agency for Tourism Development of Ukraine, as well as EU regulatory acts and programme documents.

6. Research Results

Leading EU member states have developed various cultural tourism management models that combine cultural heritage conservation, effective regulation of tourist flows, support for local communities and the long-term economic sustainability of tourist destinations. Analysis of their experience shows that successful cultural tourism development is grounded in the comprehensive use of institutional, financial, marketing and digital instruments tailored to national and regional characteristics. The study of such practices is particularly relevant for Ukraine in the context of European integration and post-war recovery, as it enables the identification of the most effective mechanisms for modernising the cultural tourism management system and enhancing its competitiveness. Analysis of the experience of leading European tourism countries reveals several basic models of sustainable cultural tourism management (Table 1).

Table 1. European Experience of Cultural Tourism Management and Opportunities for Its Adaptation in Ukraine

Model	Key Characteristics	Instruments	Key Outcomes
French model (centralised regulation and cultural heritage network)	Centralised management of cultural heritage through state institutions. France is the world leader in tourist arrivals.	Ministry of Culture and Centre des monuments nationaux; Label Patrimoine accreditation system; visitor caps at over-burdened sites; redistribution of tourism revenues to restore lesser-known monuments.	Preservation of cultural-site authenticity, tourist-flow control, support for lesser-known heritage objects.
Spanish model (decentralisation and regional identity)	Tourism management is carried out through autonomous communities with regard to regional specifics.	Camino de Santiago as a unified brand; coordination among municipalities and regions; active involvement of local communities in planning and managing tourist flows.	Strengthening of regional identity, effective management of tourist routes, development of local communities.
Austrian model (UNESCO heritage and market mechanisms)	Combination of cultural heritage protection with market-based approaches to financing and management.	Partial self-financing of museums and castles; public-private partnerships; digitisation of collections; introduction of "smart" tourist routes.	Improved financial sustainability of cultural sites, broadened heritage accessibility, development of innovative tourism products.

Czech model (diversification and thematic tourism)	Focus on developing thematic tourist routes to distribute tourist flows evenly across regions.	Beer, castle and Jewish-heritage routes; Czech Tourism state programme; funding from the state budget and EU funds; standardisation of tourist services.	Reduced tourist pressure on Prague, development of regional destinations, improved quality of tourist services.
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French model: centralised regulation and cultural heritage network. France is the world leader in tourist arrivals. Management of cultural sites is provided by the Ministry of Culture through the Centre des monuments nationaux. The key instrument is Label Patrimoine – an accreditation system based on criteria of quality and authenticity. Visitor caps have been introduced at the most heavily burdened monuments, while tourism revenues are redistributed to fund the restoration of lesser-known heritage objects [14].

Spanish model: decentralisation and regional identity. Spain implements a model of decentralised management through autonomous communities. The Camino de Santiago system exemplifies cultural route management: a unified brand connects dozens of municipalities and regions. A vital element is the involvement of local communities in planning and managing tourist flows [15].

Austrian model: UNESCO heritage and market mechanisms. Austria combines the protection of UNESCO-listed sites (for example, Vienna – a World Heritage Site) with market-based financing mechanisms. Museums and castles have moved to partial self-financing; public-private partnerships are widely practised. Digitisation of collections and the development of "smart" tourist routes greatly expand the accessibility of cultural objects [16].

Czech model: diversification and thematic tourism. The Czech Republic actively develops thematic routes (beer, castle and Jewish heritage trails), allowing tourist flows to be distributed and pressure on Prague to be reduced. The Czech Tourism programme, financed from the state budget and EU funds, provides marketing and service standardisation [17].

At the EU level, the key instruments supporting sustainable cultural tourism are the Creative Europe programme (funding for cultural and creative initiatives), COSME (support for SMEs in the tourism sector) and Horizon Europe (research in the field of sustainable tourism). The Council of Europe Cultural Routes programme encompasses more than 45 thematic paths crossing 50 states and serves as a model of transnational cooperation [18].

Ukraine's tourism potential encompasses more than 130,000 cultural heritage monuments, 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a well-developed museum network and unique intangible heritage (Petrykivka painting, Kosiv ceramics, bandura art). At the same time, the full-scale armed aggression has caused significant damage to cultural infrastructure, simultaneously highlighting the need for reconstruction and opening an opportunity for modernisation in line with best practices. The SWOT analysis yields the following findings. Strengths: unique and diverse cultural resources, high interest from international partners, European integration course. Weaknesses: inadequate tourism infrastructure, weak marketing on external markets, fragmented regulatory framework. Opportunities: attraction of EU and international organisation funding for recovery, creation of new tourism brands, partnership with the diaspora. Threats: prolonged security instability, risk of heritage degradation, outflow of qualified personnel [19].

On the basis of the analysis conducted, Figure 1 presents recommendations for adapting European experience.

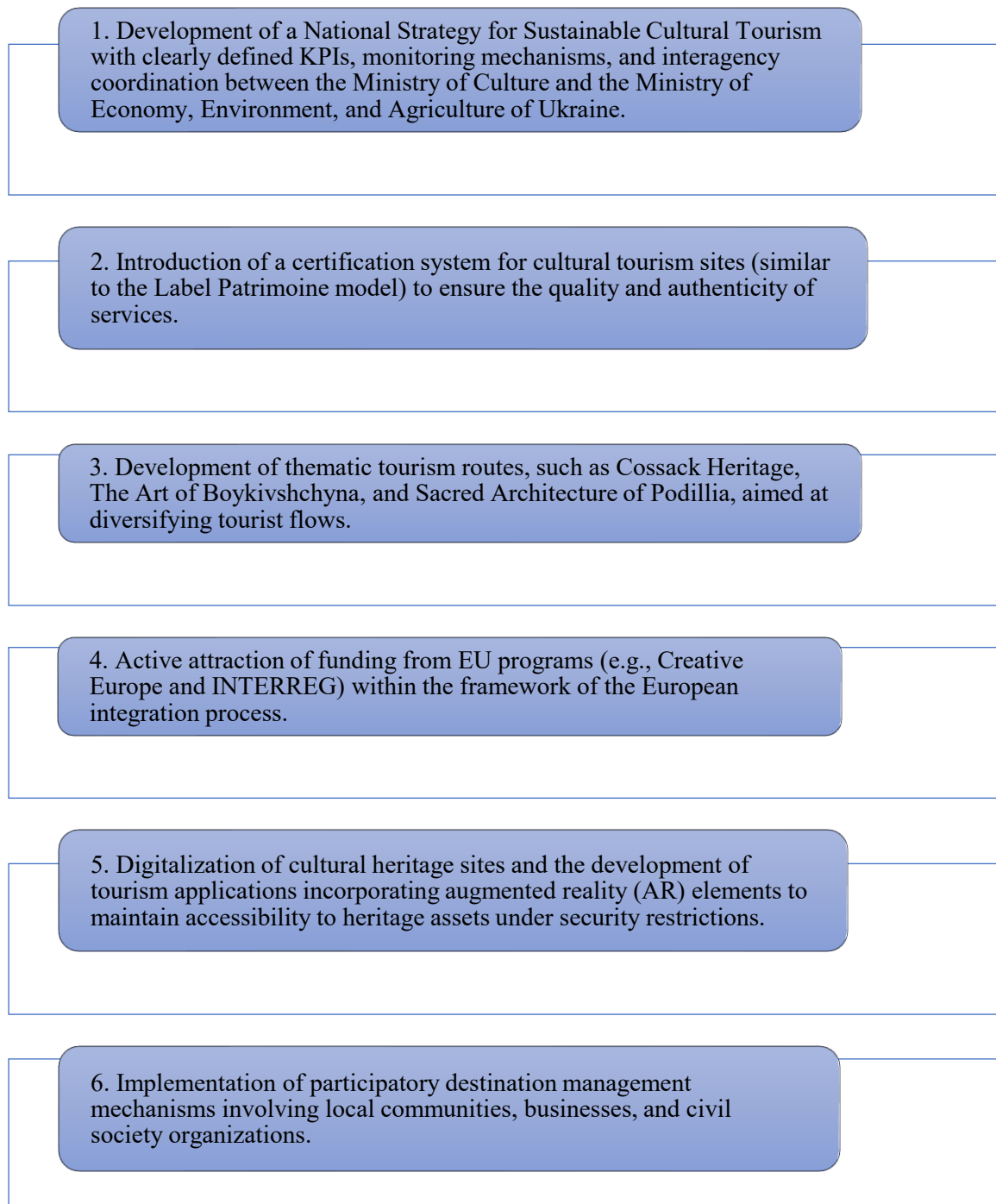


Figure 1. Strategic Directions for the Development of Cultural Tourism in Ukraine in the Context of European Integration Processes and Sustainable Development.

Ensuring sustainable cultural tourism development in Ukraine thus requires a comprehensive approach combining strategic planning, the introduction of certification systems, the development of thematic tourist routes, the attraction of EU funding, the digitalisation of cultural heritage and the active participation of local communities in destination management. Implementation of the proposed measures will enhance the competitiveness of cultural tourism, preserve national heritage, integrate Ukraine into the European tourism space and ensure sustainable regional development in the post-war period.

7. Prospects for Further Research Development

Prospects for further research include: developing regional cultural tourism management models that account for the specifics of various Ukrainian regions; assessing the economic impact of implementing sustainability principles; and examining the role of digital technologies in the transformation of cultural tourism in the post-war period.

8. Conclusions

The study has systematised and generalised the European experience of sustainable cultural tourism development and identified opportunities for its adaptation in Ukraine. It has been established that effective cultural tourism management in EU member states is grounded in a combination of institutional, financial, digital and marketing instruments aimed at preserving cultural heritage, regulating tourist flows, supporting local communities and ensuring the long-term economic sustainability of tourist destinations.

Analysis of the French, Spanish, Austrian and Czech cultural tourism management models revealed that the key factors underpinning their success are: a coherent state policy in the area of cultural heritage protection, effective interaction between authorities and local communities, diversification of tourism products, development of thematic routes and extensive use of digital technologies. Financial support mechanisms for cultural projects through state programmes and EU instruments are of particular significance.

The study showed that Ukraine has considerable potential for cultural tourism development, thanks to its rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage. At the same time, the main obstacles remain an inadequate level of tourism infrastructure, a fragmented regulatory framework, limited financial resources and the negative consequences of military operations for cultural infrastructure. The SWOT analysis confirmed the existence of significant opportunities for modernising the sector through the attraction of international assistance, the intensification of European integration processes and the introduction of contemporary approaches to cultural resource management.

It has been substantiated that the priority directions for adapting European experience in Ukraine should include: the introduction of certification and monitoring systems for cultural heritage sites, the development of a network of thematic tourist routes, the digitalisation of cultural resources, expanded partnership among the state, business and communities, and more active use of EU programmes to finance cultural tourism projects.

Adaptation of best European cultural tourism management practices will thus contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of Ukraine's tourism industry, preserving national cultural heritage, developing regions, strengthening international cooperation and integrating Ukraine into the European cultural and tourism space in the context of post-war recovery and the implementation of sustainable development principles.

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