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INNOVATIVE CULTURAL TOURISM IN EUROPEAN PERIPHERIES

Edited by

Karol Jan Borowiecki, Antonella Fresa and
José María Martín Civantos



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Innovative Cultural Tourism in European Peripheries

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6 Participatory models and approaches in sustainable cultural tourism

Kamila Borseková and Katarína Vitálišová

6.1 Introduction

Participatory models and approaches in tourism have gained widespread acceptance as a cornerstone for sustainable tourism. These models not only assist decision-makers in preserving traditional lifestyles and upholding community values but also play a pivotal role in enhancing the image and brand of a tourism destination. By offering superior customer services and fostering innovation, they strengthen the competitiveness of the destination. A shift from top-down decision-making, participatory models aim to equitably distribute power among all stakeholders, fostering a collaborative environment conducive to mutual benefits in tourism development (Ozcevik et al., 2010; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007; Cater, 1994; Murphy, 1985; Arnstein, 1969). These participatory approaches align seamlessly with the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 8, 11, 12, and 14, which emphasize inclusive growth, sustainable communities, responsible consumption, and marine conservation. Robson and Robson (1996) posited that stakeholder participation in tourism offers a framework for achieving sustainable tourism development. This balance of power, as highlighted by Vijayanand (2013), bridges the gap between traditional powerholders, such as governments and investors, and the host communities directly impacted by tourism initiatives. When this equilibrium is achieved, the result is a more inclusive, equitable, and ultimately sustainable tourism development. Tourism, as a product, is an amalgamation of diverse activities, with culture being paramount. This chapter delves deep into identifying and analysing participatory approaches within culture, cultural tourism, and sustainable cultural tourism. The underlying rationale is to accentuate the positive impacts of these models while mitigating the potential adverse effects on social ties, local heritage, and landscape conservation. Consequently, the primary objective of this chapter is to furnish readers with a thorough understanding of participatory models and approaches in culture and cultural tourism, culminating in the introduction of an innovative framework for sustainable cultural tourism.

6.2 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural tourism

In recent decades, the concept of cultural tourism has gained prominence, driven by a surge in international tourists visiting major cultural sites and attractions (Richards, 2018). Culture, as a key element of tourism appeal, facilitates access to heritage, art, creativity, and various cultural activities and practices (Matteucci & Von Zumbusch, 2020). Globalization has prompted many destinations to recognize the significance of culture in enhancing tourism offerings, ensuring authenticity, and bolstering a destination's global appeal. Consequently, niches such as creative tourism, arts tourism, film tourism, and literary tourism have emerged (Smith, 2016). While these niches offer development and marketing prospects, they also present challenges.

Cultural tourism emphasizes the cultural facets of a destination, including its heritage, landscapes, and offerings, often driving tourists' destination choices (European Commission, 2019). It engages travellers with the lifestyle, history, art, architecture, religion, and other cultural elements of a region (Slocum, Aidoo, & McMahan, 2020). Tourism, in this context, is viewed positively, as it can monetize heritage attributes, fostering conservation, community education, and policy influence. When adeptly managed, cultural tourism can spur sustainable local development, benefiting host communities and motivating them to preserve their heritage and cultural practices. It accentuates intangible heritage elements, offering avenues to promote local traditions or historical narratives (Slocum, Aidoo, & McMahan, 2020). A notable subset of cultural tourism is heritage tourism, which is rooted in local landscapes, architecture, traditions, and stories, emphasizing the uniqueness of a place (National Trust for Historical Preservation, 2001). Managing this form of tourism requires a multidisciplinary approach, balancing cultural preservation with revenue generation (Ponna & Oka Prasiassa, 2011).

Cultural tourism, while acting as a catalyst for sociocultural transformation, has its own set of challenges. It plays a pivotal role in stimulating local development, fortifying communities, creating job opportunities, and fostering capacity building. Yet, the very essence of cultural tourism, which often hinges on the allure of authenticity, can inadvertently lead to the commodification and commercialization of cultural heritage. Tourists, driven by their desire for genuine experiences, can sometimes be complicit in this commodification, turning cultural assets into marketable products and diluting their authenticity (Bitušiková, 2021; Smith, 2009).

As a response to these challenges, the concept of sustainable cultural tourism has emerged. This approach emphasizes the integrated management of cultural heritage, tourism activities, and community involvement, striving for a balance that benefits all stakeholders (EC, 2019; McKercher & du Cros, 2002). By placing cultural heritage and its communities at the forefront of decision-making, sustainable cultural tourism ensures that heritage sites are both celebrated and preserved. It champions authentic

interpretation and boosts local economies in a sustainable manner. Yet, even this form of tourism is not without its challenges. Many European destinations, popular for their rich cultural offerings, face issues of overuse and overcapacity. This over-tourism not only strains local resources but can also lead to environmental degradation and foster negative sentiments among local communities (EC, 2019; Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018). Thus, for cultural tourism to be sustainable, it is imperative that policies and practices respect and uphold the integrity of cultural heritage, ensuring that its inherent values are not compromised in the pursuit of economic gains (Council of Europe, 2005; Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009). Good example is the project 'Participatory Conversion of Historical Irrigation Systems into Cultural Routes', located in Spain's Altiplano de Granada. This project is dedicated to empowering local communities by leveraging cultural heritage as a catalyst for transformative change. It aims to establish a platform for inclusive decision-making, leading to sustainable development and the preservation of rural heritage. This approach not only respects and revitalizes historical practices but also aligns them with contemporary needs and aspirations, ensuring a balanced and sustainable future for the region (for more information, see Civantos et al., 2023).

Emerging sustainable cultural tourism paradigms are increasingly focusing on strategic planning, networking, and innovative concepts that cater to the evolving preferences of today's travellers. Concepts such as 'slow' tourism advocate for a more immersive and relaxed travel pace, allowing tourists to deeply engage with their surroundings and truly experience a destination (Hall, 2017). 'Authenticity' has become a sought-after commodity in tourism, with travellers seeking genuine experiences that reflect the true essence of a place (Wang, 1999). 'Storytelling' enhances the visitor experience by weaving narratives around cultural and historical sites, making them more relatable and memorable (Mossberg, 2008). The emphasis on 'well-being' reflects the growing trend of wellness tourism, where cultural experiences are intertwined with health and rejuvenation (Lourens, 2007). Furthermore, 'contact with locals' provides tourists with firsthand insights into local cultures, traditions, and lifestyles, fostering cross-cultural understanding and exchanges (Salazar, 2012).

Society's intricate relationship with cultural heritage goes beyond passive observation. It encompasses active engagement in its expression, conservation, interpretation, and utilization. Heritage communities and individuals play pivotal roles in shaping and preserving cultural narratives. Far from being passive recipients or mere 'audiences', they are active participants, contributing significantly to participatory governance, scientific endeavours, and the holistic management of cultural heritage, as highlighted by EC (2019) and Bortolotto (2007). An interesting example of this active participation is the 'Bulliot, Bibracte et moi' project, which focuses on transcribing and digitizing the handwritten excavation notebooks of Jacques-Gabriel Bulliot. This project uniquely involved the public in the transcription process through

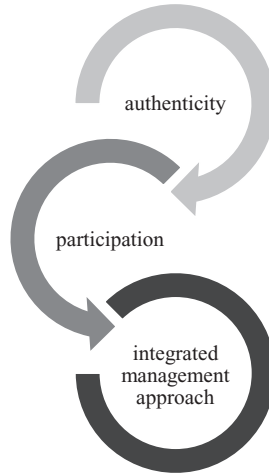


Figure 6.1 Main features of sustainable cultural tourism.

Transkribus, an online platform where participants trained an AI system to recognize Bulliot's handwriting. What sets this project apart is its empowerment of amateurs to undertake crucial tasks, thereby fostering a sense of community involvement in preserving and interpreting cultural heritage. The project exemplifies how participatory science can unlock the potential of archival materials, engage the public in scientific endeavours, and promote a deeper understanding of archaeological heritage. By combining the expertise of researchers with public contributions, the 'Bulliot, Bibracte et moi' project not only advances archaeological knowledge but also serves as a valuable model for future participatory projects in archaeology, culture, and related fields. For more information on this innovative approach, see Borsekova et al., 2023. Involvement and active building of heritage communities ensures that cultural heritage remains dynamic, relevant, and resonant, reflecting the evolving values and aspirations of the community while preserving its essence for future generations (Smith, 2006).

Figure 6.1 summarizes the main features of sustainable cultural tourism.

Sustainable cultural tourism underscores the importance of an integrated approach, harmonizing cultural heritage, tourism activities, and community involvement (EC, 2019; McKercher & du Cros, 2002). This approach not only ensures that heritage sites are celebrated but also emphasizes their preservation. A key tenet is a promotion of authentic interpretation, which not only resonates with tourists but also support local economies in a sustainable manner. However, this form of tourism is not without its challenges. Over-tourism, for instance, has emerged as a significant concern, straining local resources and potentially leading to environmental degradation (EC, 2019; Koens et al., 2018). To navigate these challenges, it's imperative that policies and practices are crafted with a deep respect for

cultural heritage, ensuring its integrity remains uncompromised (Council of Europe, 2005; Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009). As the landscape of tourism evolves, sustainable cultural tourism is increasingly focusing on strategic planning, networking, and embracing innovative concepts. These include ‘slow’ tourism, ‘authenticity’, ‘storytelling’, ‘well-being’, and fostering deeper ‘contact with locals’ (Hall, 2017; Wang, 1999; Mossberg, 2008; Lourens, 2007; Salazar, 2012). Cultural tourism, deeply rooted in the rich tapestry of local heritage and traditions, finds its true sustainable potential when participatory approaches are embraced, ensuring that the voices of local communities and stakeholders shape the narrative. Hence, the next section is devoted to outlining participatory approaches in culture, cultural tourism, and sustainable cultural tourism.

6.3 Participatory approaches in culture, cultural tourism, and sustainable cultural tourism

Participatory approaches have emerged as a transformative paradigm in the realms of culture, cultural tourism, and sustainable cultural tourism. Rooted in the principle of inclusive decision-making, these approaches prioritize the active involvement of local communities, visitors, and other stakeholders, in shaping cultural narratives and experiences. In the context of cultural tourism, this means co-creating tourism products that authentically represent local heritage, traditions, and values. As the tourism industry grapples with the challenges of sustainability, participatory methods offer a path forward, ensuring that cultural tourism not only celebrates and preserves cultural heritage but also promotes socio-economic benefits for local communities, ensuring a harmonious and sustainable future.

6.3.1 Participatory approaches in culture

Culture and cultural heritage are pivotal development factors, enhancing the quality of life both within communities and in broader contexts. Local culture plays a crucial role in regional development (Bole et al., 2013; Nared et al., 2013; Nared & Bole, 2020). Echoing this sentiment, the European Commission (2014) emphasized the profound economic and social impacts of cultural heritage and activities, extending beyond cultural tourism to include the promotion of cultural and creative industries. The term ‘culture-based development’ has gained traction in locales seeking innovative development strategies (Tubadji, 2012). Such development hinges on local actors and their interrelations (Bole et al., 2013). To be a catalyst for development, culture must be effectively evaluated, negotiated, and implemented by a diverse group of stakeholders. The Convention (1972) advocates for the integration of culture into community life, necessitating continuous stakeholder interactions, underscoring the significance of participatory processes (Nared et al., 2013).

These processes should be grassroots, addressing tangible issues (Alfarè & Nared, 2014; Nared, 2014; Nared & Bole, 2020). It is evident in practice by the project ‘Multaka: Museum as Meeting Point – Refugees as Guides in Berlin Museums’ project. This commendable initiative trains Syrian and Iraqi refugees to become museum guides, enabling them to conduct tours in Arabic for other Arabic-speaking refugees. Not only are these tours offered free of charge, but the project, aptly named ‘Multaka’ (Arabic for ‘meeting point’), also serves as a platform for exchanging diverse cultural and historical experiences (for more information, see Borsekova et al., 2023).

The governance of culture has evolved since the 1980s, with Culture 3.0 marking a significant shift. This paradigm is characterized by innovations stemming from a transformation in cultural production. Technologies like radio, television, and cinema democratized access to cultural content (Sacco et al., 2013, 2018). Culture 3.0 heralded an era where producers proliferated (Potts et al., 2008), enabling individuals to co-design, co-create, and co-produce cultural services (Ciolfi et al., 2008). This dynamic aligns with the concept of ‘prosumerism’ (Duncum, 2011), where individuals both produce and consume cultural content (UNESCO, 2009).

Central to Culture 3.0 is an active cultural participation, which transcends passive consumption, prompting individuals to harness their skills in the creative process, thereby redefining their social identities (Sacco et al., 2018). Cultural participation encompasses both formal events and informal community activities, reflecting traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 2009). It can be approached horizontally, promoting participation in specific activities, or democratically, emphasizing citizen influence and control (Eriksson, 2020). Cultural economics has elucidated the complexities of cultural participation, exploring its determinants and its relationship with local and regional development (Ateca-Amestoy, 2008; Ateca-Amestoy & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2013; Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016). Cultural participation is important for redistributing power, ensuring inclusive future processes. The digital revolution has ushered in Culture 4.0, intertwining culture and technology. This phase recognizes the transformative potential of technologies like artificial intelligence and virtual reality in cultural practices.

6.3.2 Participatory approaches in cultural tourism and sustainable cultural tourism

Community participation in cultural tourism is a multifaceted concept, intricately weaving the nuances of culture with the dynamics of tourism. While the models of cultural participation have been previously delineated, it’s imperative to delve deeper into the role of community engagement in tourism. This section aims to elucidate the significance of community participation, its specificities, and, subsequently, the governance and models in cultural tourism as an alternative form rooted in cultural and tourism development.

Murphy (1985) underscored the significance of the host community in tourism. His work aimed to assess the capacity of local communities to accommodate tourism by identifying their aspirations and objectives. Adopting an ecosystem approach, Murphy emphasized that planning must be intricate, reaching down to the community level. A growing consensus suggests that community participation is indispensable for tourism development (Cole, 2006; Botes & van Rensburg, 2000). Such participation ensures community support for development plans, aligns benefits with local needs, and fosters democratic processes (Tosun & Timothy, 2003). A participatory approach in tourism seeks to deviate from unilateral top-down decision-making. It aims to distribute power equitably among stakeholders, fostering a collaborative environment (Ozcevik et al., 2010; Arnstein, 1969). Haywood (1988) defines participation as a shared decision-making process involving all stakeholders. This approach values the preservation of traditional lifestyles and community values (Murphy, 1985; Wild, 1994; Cater, 1994). Collaborative tourism emphasizes shared experiences, pooling resources, and collective problem-solving (Vernon et al., 2005). Wang and Fesenmaier (2007) highlight its role in enhancing destination branding, product development, and fostering innovation. Empowering communities is essential, recognizing them as integral to the cultural product and addressing their concerns (Timothy, 2011).

Sustainable tourism acknowledges the pivotal role of community engagement (Cole, 2006). Byrd (2007) identifies four stakeholder groups in sustainable tourism: present tourists, present host communities, future tourists, and future host communities. The success of sustainable tourism hinges on the support of these stakeholders (Gunn, 1994). Robson and Robson (1996) advocate for a balanced power dynamic between traditional power holders and host communities, ensuring equitable and sustainable tourism development.

Community-based tourism (CBT) emerges as an alternative, focusing on the benefits for residents in developing regions. It promotes cultural interactions, hospitality services, and biodiversity conservation (Kiss, 2004; Luccetti & Font, 2013). CBT emphasizes the importance of local control, shifting the reins of tourism from external entities to the community itself (Simpson, 2008; González-Herrera et al., 2022). The World Tourism Organization recognizes CBT's potential to preserve culture, foster innovation, and provide educational opportunities (WTO & UNEP, 2005).

In the realm of sustainable cultural tourism, participatory approaches have emerged as a basis for ensuring both the preservation of cultural assets and the equitable distribution of tourism benefits. As Smith and Richards (2013) noted in their seminal work, the active involvement of local communities and other stakeholders in decision-making processes not only engenders a sense of ownership but also ensures that tourism strategies are congruent with local values and aspirations. The transformative potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in this context cannot be overstated. Johnson and McCarthy's (2019) study underscores how ICT can be

Cultural Participation	Participation in Cultural Tourism	Participation in Sustainable Cultural Tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive decisionmaking. • Active involvement of local communities, stakeholders, and visitors (formal and informal). • Co-creation, co-design, and co-production of cultural services. • Active cultural participation. • Can be approached horizontally (specific activities) or democratically (citizen influence and control). • Cultural participation is pivotal for redistributing power and ensuring inclusive future processes. • Digital revolution (Culture 4.0) emphasizes active engagement facilitated by technologies. • Bolsters social inclusion, fosters entrepreneurship, and addresses societal challenges. • Recognizes the transformative potential of technologies in cultural practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-creation of tourism products that authentically represent local heritage, traditions, and values. • The significance of the host community in tourism. • Aims to distribute power equitably among stakeholders. • Preserves the traditional lifestyles and community values. • Collaborative tourism emphasizes shared experiences, pooling resources, and collective problem-solving. • Empowers communities, recognizing them as integral to the cultural product. • Community-based tourism (CBT) focuses on benefits for residents, promoting cultural interactions, hospitality services, and biodiversity conservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that cultural tourism celebrates and preserves cultural heritage. • Promotes socioeconomic benefits for local communities. • Recognizes the central role of community engagement. • Advocates for a balanced power dynamic between traditional power holders and host communities. • Emphasizes the importance of local control in tourism. • Active involvement of local communities and stakeholders in decision-making processes engenders a sense of ownership • ICT can be leveraged to both preserve and dynamically showcase intangible cultural heritage. • Championing participatory approaches underpinned by traditional community engagement mechanisms and technological innovations.

Figure 6.2 Characteristics of cultural participation, participation in cultural tourism, and participation in sustainable cultural tourism.

leveraged to both preserve and dynamically showcase intangible cultural heritage, thereby enriching the visitor experience. The efficacy of Participatory Action Research in fostering community-centric initiatives that drive sustainable change has been highlighted by Thompson et al. (2018). In this digital age, the nexus of culture, tourism, and technology offers a promising trajectory for sustainable development (Rodriguez & Moretti, 2020).

Figure 6.2 presents key characteristics of cultural participation, participation in cultural tourism, and participation in sustainable cultural tourism. These characteristics highlight the importance of active involvement, co-creation, and the integration of technology in shaping cultural narratives, tourism products, and sustainable practices. For cultural tourism to realize its full potential in terms of sustainability, it is imperative to support participatory approaches, underpinned by both traditional community engagement mechanisms and cutting-edge technological innovations including digitalization. Therefore, the next section is devoted to digitalization and sustainable cultural tourism.

6.4 Digitalization and sustainable cultural tourism

In Culture 4.0, traditional cultural expressions are reimagined through digital platforms, blurring the lines between creators and users. It emphasizes active engagement, facilitated by digital technologies, allowing individuals

to shape the cultural landscape in novel ways. Cultural participation has profound social and economic implications as it can empower social inclusion, foster entrepreneurship, and address societal challenges. High levels of cultural participation can foster support for investment in the cultural sector (OECD, 2021).

Digital transformation is revolutionizing every sector, with cultural tourism being no exception. Sonkoly and Vahtikari (2018) argue that digitalization democratizes cultural heritage, making it more accessible to the masses. This transformation, as defined by Mergel et al. (2019) and Margiono (2021), leverages technology to enhance governance, creating value for both consumers and businesses. Vial (2019) emphasizes the role of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies in this shift. The intricate relationship between digital technology, culture, and tourism has been explored by numerous scholars (see, e.g. Cipolla et al., 2011; Logan et al., 2015). The European Commission (2019) notes that digitalization encompasses economic, social, cultural, and organizational transformations, all driven by digital technologies.

Seifert and Rössel (2022) introduce the concept of digital participation, which they argue is a step beyond mere connectivity. It's about how individuals immerse themselves in the digital realm, interacting with a myriad of online services and content. This sentiment is echoed by Stratigea and Katsoni (2015), whose work sees a world of possibilities at the intersection of culture, tourism, and ICT. They discuss the profound implications this convergence has on the lifecycle of cultural products – from their creation and evaluation to their management and promotion. The overarching goal is to harness digital technologies not just as tools but as catalysts that amplify the essence of cultural content, ensuring its preservation and fostering a deeper understanding. Panagiotopoulou et al. (2019) envision a future where these technological advancements bolster the allure of cultural destinations, making them more marketable than ever.

The European Commission (2022) joins this discourse, emphasizing the need to harness the potential of heritage digitization fully. This sentiment is not just about preserving the past but enhancing the cultural tourism experience of the present and a perspective shared (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014; Neuhofer et al., 2015). A good example of this is The Love Bank in Banská Štiavnica (for more information, see Vitálišová et al., 2022). Situated in the heart of a UNESCO World Heritage site, the museum plays a crucial role in preserving historical heritage. Its main mission is to safeguard the poem 'Marina' for future generations, thereby maintaining unique aspects of Slovak literature and history in a creative, modern format. The museum's strategy effectively combines historical heritage with innovative presentation methods. This approach proved particularly relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to new opportunities like virtual love boxes, demonstrating the dynamic potential of blending heritage with modern technology.

The post-pandemic world has further accentuated the indispensability of ICT in the realm of cultural tourism. As highlighted by Garau (2015) and Marzo-Navarro et al. (2017), the aftermath of the pandemic saw a surge in the reliance on digital platforms to keep the spirit of cultural exploration alive. Travel apps, as noted by Dickinson et al. (2014) and Xiang et al. (2015), have emerged as invaluable companions for tourists, enriching their experiences manifold. Economou (2015) further to this narrative emphasizes that these digital tools not only enhance the travel experience but also play a crucial role in deepening tourists' appreciation and understanding of local cultures and identities.

Another example of integrating technology with cultural heritage is provided by a project in the Posavje region (Slovenia), as detailed by Straus et al. (2019). This initiative aims to create an immersive digital experience for tourists, blending modern technology with the rich history and cultural significance of the region's castles. By engaging visitors in a captivating manner, the project sought not only to enhance the tourism experience but also to encourage more extensive exploration of the area's unique historical landmarks. This approach represents a novel way of promoting tourism and preserving cultural heritage using digital technology.

The European Commission emphasizes the importance of preserving and digitizing cultural heritage for the current digital age. Their Recommendation 2021/1970 promotes frameworks to bolster the cultural heritage sector, ensuring its resilience and transformation. This initiative aims to improve digitization quality, reuse, and digital preservation across the EU, benefiting sectors like tourism and research. Technologies such as Data, AI, 3D, and XR are rejuvenating cultural heritage sites. Virtual museums, for instance, offer immersive experiences, allowing visitors to view artworks in their original context. The Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology of the European Commission has been proactive in supplementing the cultural policies of Member States, focusing on digitalization, online access, and digital preservation. Social media platforms, including forums, blogs, and Instagram, are becoming key ones in promoting tourism destinations (Leung et al., 2013; Sotiriadis, 2017). Influencers on these platforms share experiences, influencing potential tourists (Moro & Rita, 2018). However, this can lead to contradictions in sustainability, as better promotion could result in over-tourism, which is not sustainable. Therefore, it is crucial to involve local communities in shaping the future of tourist destinations. Cultural tourism is undergoing a transformation, with attractions like museums adopting augmented and virtual reality to enhance visitor experiences (Richards, 2019). Digitalization is reshaping sustainable cultural tourism, making it more accessible, engaging, and informative. To conclude previous three sections, sustainable cultural tourism is characterized by its emphasis on active community involvement, the co-creation of authentic experiences, and the seamless integration of technology, as depicted in Figure 6.3. This form of tourism



Figure 6.3 Essentials of sustainable cultural tourism.

thrives when it melds participatory methods with both age-old community engagement practices and modern technological advancements like digitalization. As the digital era progresses, the cultural tourism industry must continually innovate to offer enriched and immersive experiences for its audience.

Active community involvement emphasizes the crucial role of local communities in shaping and influencing the direction and offerings of cultural tourism, ensuring that it remains authentic and representative of the local culture. Co-creation of authentic experiences in sustainable cultural tourism encourages collaboration between tourists and locals to create genuine and memorable cultural experiences. Through integration of technology and leveraging modern technologies, sustainable cultural tourism can enhance the visitor experience, making it more interactive, informative, and accessible. Emphasis on participatory methods underscores the importance of including various stakeholders, from local communities to tourists, in the decision-making processes related to cultural tourism. Blend of traditional community engagement and modern innovations means that while it's essential to preserve and respect traditional cultural practices, sustainable cultural tourism also embraces contemporary innovations to enrich the overall experience. Continuous adaptation and innovation in the digital age are recognizing the rapid advancements in technology, and sustainable cultural tourism is always evolving, ensuring that it remains relevant and appealing to modern audiences.

6.5 Proposal of participatory framework for sustainable cultural tourism inspired by INCULTUM project and its pilot actions

The INCULTUM project, with its ten pioneering pilot actions, offers a groundbreaking approach to cultural tourism. The INCULTUM project, along with its pilot actions, is tailored to address both the challenges and opportunities inherent in cultural tourism. Its primary objective is to promote sustainable social, cultural, and economic growth within the territories. By tapping into the untapped potential of marginal and peripheral areas and placing their management in the hands of local communities and stakeholders, the project adopts innovative participatory methods. These approaches empower residents, transforming them into key players who can mitigate adverse effects. By learning from and enhancing best practices, these methods can be replicated and integrated into broader strategies and policies. The proposed participatory framework for sustainable cultural tourism is influenced by the insights of Panagiotopoulou et al. (2017, 2019), Borsekova et al. (2017, 2022) and the theoretical review outlined in this chapter. Drawing inspiration also from INCULTUM innovative strategies, we propose a participatory framework (see Figure 6.4) aimed at fostering sustainable cultural tourism, ensuring that both local communities and visitors collaboratively engage in preserving and celebrating cultural heritage for generations to come. Some inspiration for the proposal of this framework is drawn from INCULTUM pilot cases in Ireland and Slovakia. In Ireland, the Historic Graves project stands out as a unique, community-focused grassroots heritage initiative. It empowers local community groups by providing them with training in cost-effective, high-tech field surveys of historic graveyards and in recording their own oral histories. These groups collaborate to create a comprehensive online record of historic graves in their areas, cumulatively forming a valuable national resource. The project establishes a systematic and standardized approach to surveying historic graveyards. In Slovakia, the pilot action focuses on the underdeveloped mining heritage tourism potential in the Banská Bystrica region. It aims to create an interactive, participatory digital platform named *Mining Treasures*. This initiative is designed to engage and involve the community in preserving and promoting the region's rich mining heritage, leveraging digital tools to enhance accessibility and interest (for more information, see, Borsekova et al., 2023).

In the initial stage of our proposed participatory framework for sustainable cultural tourism, a thorough analysis of the external environment is paramount. This begins with an evaluation of how cultural tourism aligns with the global Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing its role in holistic development. Concurrently, it's essential to understand the resilience of cultural tourism during economic downturns, particularly its adaptability and potential as a catalyst for recovery in the face of economic recessions. The European Policy Agenda's stance on the integration of culture, tourism, and digitalization is another pivotal aspect. By assessing how these elements

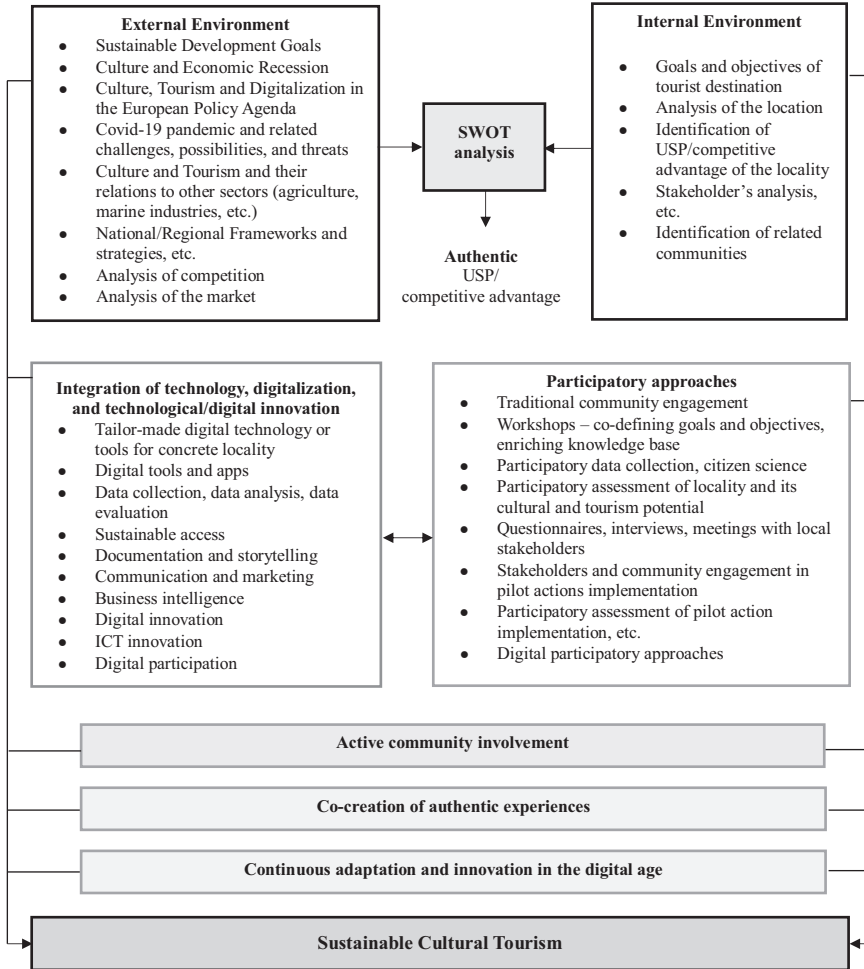


Figure 6.4 Proposal of participatory framework for sustainable cultural tourism.

Source: inspired by Panagiotopoulou et al. (2017, 2019), Borsekova et al. (2015, 2017, 2022) and INCULTUM pilot actions

are prioritized and strategized by European policymakers, we can gauge the direction and emphasis of regional initiatives. The Covid-19 pandemic, with its profound impact on the global landscape, necessitates an exploration of the opportunities and threats it presents to cultural tourism. This exploration provides insights into the sector's adaptability and the innovative strategies required to navigate such unprecedented times. Furthermore, the intricate interplay between cultural tourism and other sectors, such as agriculture and marine industries, cannot be overlooked. By investigating these symbiotic relationships, we can discern how cultural tourism can benefit from

and contribute to these sectors. This holistic approach is complemented by a review of existing policy frameworks and strategies at both national and regional levels, ensuring that our framework is in harmony with prevailing guidelines and objectives. Lastly, to ensure the framework's viability and relevance, it's crucial to identify the key competitors in the cultural tourism landscape. By understanding their strengths and weaknesses, we can carve out a unique niche for our framework. This is further enriched by gauging the current market dynamics, which involves understanding the preferences of the target audience and anticipating future trends in cultural tourism.

The subsequent stage of our proposed Participatory Framework for sustainable cultural tourism delves into an in-depth analysis of the internal environment. This phase begins by pinpointing the goals and objectives of the tourist destination, ensuring a clear vision and direction for future endeavours. An intricate examination of the location follows focusing on its geographical, cultural, and historical attributes that can influence tourism dynamics. Central to this stage is an identification of the Unique Selling Proposition (USPs) or the competitive advantage of the locality, which distinguishes it from other destinations and offers a compelling reason for tourists to visit. Equally vital is a stakeholder analysis, which maps out key players, their interests, and their influence on the tourism ecosystem. This comprehensive approach is rounded off by identifying related communities, ensuring that the framework is inclusive and takes into account the diverse groups that contribute to and benefit from cultural tourism. The culmination of both internal and external environment analyses results in a SWOT analysis. SWOT, an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, provides a structured framework to evaluate tourist destination position by identifying its internal capabilities and external market dynamics. Following the comprehensive SWOT analysis, the insights gleaned from the previous steps facilitate the identification of an authentic USP or competitive advantage.

Competitive advantage, rooted in Porter's theory, is described as a superior capability to compete, central to economic and business activities in competitive markets (Porter, 1990). Two primary approaches to competitive advantage are a market-oriented approach, emphasizing external factors like market conditions (Kotler, 2002; Porter, 1990; Vaňová, 2006), and a resource-based approach, which prioritizes internal resources (Barney, 1995; Hall, 1993; Pfeffer, 1994; Powell, 1992; Ulrich & Lake, 1991). While the former leverages external opportunities, the latter underscores the significance of internal assets. This dichotomy raises debates about the true sources of competitive advantage. In tourism, 'competitive advantage' is frequently synonymous with the term 'unique selling proposition' (USP) (see, e.g., King, 2010). The essence of a USP lies in its authenticity, resonating with visitors' travel objectives and motivations. Often, authentic competitive advantage is rooted in culture and unique cultural assets that are distinct to each destination (see, e.g., Borsekova et al., 2015, 2017). This USP, rooted in genuine

attributes and values of the destination, emerges as a pivotal component, becoming an integral and defining element of the entire framework. It not only differentiates the destination but also ensures its offerings resonate with authenticity and depth, enhancing its appeal to discerning tourists.

The ensuing component of our proposed framework underscores the integration of technology, digitalization, and technological/digital innovation. In the realm of their integrating, several options emerge. One can begin with the development of tailor-made digital technologies or tools, each meticulously designed to resonate with specific localities. This is complemented by the utilization of digital tools and apps, all aimed at elevating the tourist experience.

To ensure decisions are data-driven, robust systems for data collection, analysis, and evaluation are paramount. Equally vital is the sustainable access to these digital resources, ensuring longevity and reliability. The cultural essence of a destination can be vividly portrayed through innovative documentation and storytelling techniques, making the narrative come alive for visitors. In the age of digital ubiquity, communication and marketing strategies must leverage digital platforms, optimizing reach and engagement. Business intelligence tools stand as invaluable assets, offering insights into market trends and consumer behaviours, thus enabling proactive and informed strategies. To remain at the forefront, it's essential to champion both digital and ICT innovations. And, to ensure a holistic approach, promoting digital participation becomes crucial, ensuring that every stakeholder, from local communities to visitors, is actively engaged in the journey of digital transformation.

The important component of our proposed framework emphasizes the exploitation of suitable participatory approaches. This involves different approaches, for example traditional community engagement methods that foster a sense of belonging and ownership among locals. Workshops can play a crucial role, serving as platforms for co-defining goals and objectives and enriching the collective knowledge base. Participatory data collection methods, including citizen science initiatives, offer a grassroots perspective, ensuring that the data is both comprehensive and relevant. A hands-on assessment of the locality, focusing on its cultural and tourism potential, is achieved through participatory evaluations. Tools such as questionnaires, interviews, and meetings with local stakeholders provide in-depth insights and feedback. Furthermore, stakeholder and community involvement are pivotal during the implementation of pilot actions, ensuring that initiatives are grounded in local realities. The assessment of these pilot actions is also participatory, ensuring feedback loops for continuous improvement. To complement these traditional methods, digital participatory approaches are integrated, leveraging technology to enhance engagement and reach. Of course, not all of these approaches and methods need to be employed simultaneously.

It's crucial to select approaches that best align with the purpose and characteristics of the locality, ensuring they effectively support subsequent stages. As we transition to the next phase, active community involvement becomes

paramount, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration among locals. This involvement sets the stage for the co-creation of authentic experiences, where the authentic USP plays a pivotal role in crafting memorable and genuine tourist interactions. As the digital landscape continually evolves, continuous adaptation and innovation in the digital age are essential, ensuring that the framework remains relevant and forward-looking. It's vital to note that the authentic USP remains a cornerstone throughout these stages. Collectively, these steps, when executed with precision and commitment, can significantly bolster Sustainable Cultural Tourism.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out with the primary objective of offering a thorough examination of participatory models in the realms of culture, cultural tourism, and sustainable cultural tourism. We outlined the key characteristics of cultural participation, participation in cultural tourism, and sustainable cultural tourism, emphasizing the importance of active involvement, co-creation, and the integration of technology. These elements are crucial in shaping cultural narratives, tourism products, and sustainable practices.

Active community involvement is highlighted as essential for ensuring cultural tourism remains authentic and representative of local culture. The co-creation of authentic experiences in sustainable cultural tourism is encouraged, fostering collaboration between tourists and locals to create memorable cultural experiences. The integration of technology plays a significant role in enhancing the visitor experience, making it more interactive, informative, and accessible. The emphasis on participatory methods is beneficial due to involving various stakeholders, from local communities to tourists, in decision-making processes related to cultural tourism. The blend of traditional community engagement and modern innovations suggests that while preserving and respecting traditional cultural practices is vital, embracing contemporary innovations is equally important to enrich the overall experience. Recognizing the rapid advancements in technology, continuous adaptation and innovation are necessary to ensure sustainable cultural tourism remains relevant and appealing to modern audiences.

Our in-depth exploration, enriched by the practical insights from the INCULTUM project, has culminated in the introduction of an innovative participatory framework for sustainable cultural tourism. Key characteristics of this approach include active involvement, co-creation, and the use of technology in shaping cultural narratives and tourism products.

The framework begins with an analysis of the external environment as understanding the strengths and weaknesses of key competitors and current market dynamics is very important in this stage. Internally, the framework focuses on identifying the goals, objectives, and competitive advantage or USPs of tourist destinations. The integration of technology and digitalization is a critical component of the framework. This includes the development

of tailor-made digital tools, utilization of digital apps, and innovative documentation and storytelling techniques.

Participatory approaches are crucial, combining traditional community engagement methods with digital participatory approaches. Continuous adaptation and innovation in the digital age ensure the framework's relevance and effectiveness. The authentic competitive advantage or USP remains a cornerstone throughout these stages, guiding the development of memorable and genuine tourist interactions. To conclude, this framework for sustainable cultural tourism, drawing inspiration from successful pilot cases and theoretical insights, offers a comprehensive approach to fostering sustainable growth in cultural tourism. It emphasizes the importance of community participation, technological integration, and continuous innovation, ensuring a balanced and forward-looking approach to cultural tourism development.

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