*Benefactions of Cultural Events Arts in Kenya Expanding*

*Tourism Industry*

*Prof. Dennis Mugambi*

AJP

# Potential of Selected Cultural Assets for Sustainable Tourism Development in France

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to explore the potential of cultural assets particularly the handicrafts for sustainable cultural tourism development as an alternative form of tourism product for diversification in France.

**Methodology:** The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that cultural products need to be developed in such a way that management can reduce potentially harmful impacts on the local communities, and at the same time, protect their interests and well-being.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The study recommends that the Government should collaborate with the local community in development and planning of cultural assets so as to ensure sustainability of cultural assets in the industry.

**Keywords:** *Community, Cultural Assets, Tourism Development, France, Cultural Tourism, Economic Activities, Tourism Potential.*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the areas of the global economy with the greatest growth is tourism. Since the 1950s, international tourism has practically continuously increased and has nearly doubled in the last ten years. Tourism holds special potential for developing nations because it is expanding more quickly in these regions than in the rest of the world (UNWTO, 2015). 52 million more foreign visitors brought the total number of arrivals worldwide to a record 1,087 million in 2013, as international tourism grew by 5 percent (UNWTO, 2016). International visitor visits hit a new high of 1.2 billion in 2016, which is 46 million more overnight travelers than in 2015. (UNWTO, 2017). International arrivals increased by 6% between January and April 2017 and the corresponding period in 2016, with business optimism at its best levels in a decade (UNWTO, 2017).

France has a remarkable natural and cultural legacy, including castles, churches, parks, and fortified cities. The variety of sites that may be visited is outstanding, and they have a powerful pull-on traveler broad. The biodiversity of France is a significant asset as well; 4,500 native plant species have been identified, 943 of which are threatened. There are 531 different animal species in all; as is the case everywhere, human way of life and the loss of natural habitats have a negative impact on these ecosystems. 38 species have become endangered as a result (among them 22 birds and 9 mammals, including bats). Therefore, in the framework of the sustainable growth of tourism, the protection of this priceless asset is an essential problem in French tourism strategy. A sound preservation mechanism is formed by a number of regulations and bodies, which are safeguarded by robust regulatory protection. For more than ten years, France's tourism industry has grown steadily. On the other side, one of the top vacation spots is France, which is well known as the birthplace of the original Safari and the iconic world (WTTC, 2015). This is a result of its special collection of tourist attractions, which includes Mediterranean beaches and a wealth of wildlife that is working to recover thanks to tourism.

As The United Cities and Local Governments group released a report in 2010 titled "Culture is the fourth pillar of sustainable development," arguing that the original three dimensions of sustainable development do not correspond to modern society, advocates have pushed for the recognition of a fourth pillar culture over the last few years (UCLG, 2022). Since promoting cultural assets increases France's chances of economic success, the country signed the 2005 UNESCO Treaty for the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression in October 2007 and joined the convention as a state in January 2008. (UNESCO, 2022).

### Statement of the Problem

The tourism industry faces the same challenges as the creative cultural economy because it relates to inherited and current forms of community creativity that have not been officially acknowledged and accounted for, supported, or promoted as having any potential to generate foreign exchange earnings, support employment, or stimulate economic growth (George, 2015). Due to this, handicraft production has decreased in the cultural sector, particularly in France, which has hampered the tourism sector for the past two decades. So, these are a few of the obstacles to the growth of cultural tourism in France. As a result, the cultural sector lacks complementary cultural activities that could serve as cultural hubs. The rich and varied indigenous cultural items continue to be exploited for tourism, according to the France Tourism Board (2015).

## Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine the potential of cultural tourism assets in France for sustainable tourism development as an alternative form of product diversification in France.

## Significance of the Study

This research is motivated by a desire to aid in achieving the vision of social and economic goals, particularly those related to empowering young people. The research would also raise consciousness about the role cultural assets can play in promoting France's cultural tourism's long-term viability. The results of this study will add to the existing body of knowledge in the field of cultural assets with regards to cultural tourism development, cultural tourism market demand, and cultural tourist expectation, as well as cultural tourism marketing.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Cultural Tourism Assets

In spite of the fact that the terms "cultural tourism" and "cultural tourists" are frequently used, they have not been adequately defined (Aluza *et al*., 2018). For the sake of this analysis, "cultural tourism" will be understood to mean any type of tourism that focuses on exposing its participants to local customs and traditions in areas such as visual arts and crafts, performances, festivals, landscapes, cuisine, occupational settings, and religious practices. In a paper, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) argued that the term "cultural tourism" is difficult to define because it can have different connotations to different people (Isaac, 2018). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines cultural tourism as "travel for cultural purposes such as study, the performing arts, cultural sites and monuments, travel to study nature, and pilgrimages" (Csapo, 2022). This means that scholars have debated the concept of "cultural tourism" for quite some time because there is no single definition that encompasses all of its facets.

### Potential of Cultural Assets

The capacity of a destination to provide visitors with all of their wants, needs, and desired outcomes is known as the destination's "tourism potential" (Smith, 2019). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are just two of the many organizations that see tourism as a promising way to help developing nations lift themselves out of poverty (Crowes & Vengas, 2018). (WTO, 2022). Reducing poverty, increasing educational opportunities, improving maternal health, promoting gender equality, and decreasing rates of child mortality, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases are all issues that development of cultural assets seeks to address (UNDP, 2015).

### Empirical Review

Rasoolimanesh *et al*. (2017) conducted a study on sustainable tourism development and residents' perceptions in world heritage site destinations. Set in Malaysia's Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site (WHS), this paper uses stakeholder theory to explore the heterogeneity of positive and negative perceptions among residents and their effects on residents' support for and participation in sustainable tourism development. Data from 221 completed questionnaire surveys revealed heterogeneous negative perceptions across residents' age, level of education and economic involvement in tourism. Moreover, residents' positive perceptions had a positive effect on their support for and participation in tourism development. This study contributes to the resident

perception literature by using stakeholder theory to conceptualize the heterogeneity of residents' perceptions and by examining the effects of those perceptions on their support for and participation in tourism development in a rural WHS destination in the developing world. Furthermore, the findings of this study have practical implications for local authorities aiming to improve residents' support and participation in tourism planning for sustaining tourism development.

Aranburu *et al.* (2016) conducted a study on sustainable cultural tourism in urban destinations. The general objective of this study was to analyze how central" the resources (museums, monuments, etc.) are and what the interactions between them are. Comprehending which factors influence visitors' urban mobility behavior is key to understanding tourists' consumption of space and their connections with the tourism assets of the city. The methodology based on GPS technologies, network analysis, and surveys. This methodology is the main contribution of this work. The results suggest that; easy mobility (walkability, accessibility, different transport modes) of the visited space facilitates the tourist experience; simple and eligible mental maps of the city that are easily perceived by visitors facilitate the rapid consumption of the tourist destination; and the centrality of the tourism resources affects the mobility of visitors and the consumption of the destination. Thus, by understanding how tourist mobility works in a destination and analyzing tourism resources' centrality, policy makers may better tailor sustainable strategies for cultural tourism destinations.

Pereiro's (2016) conducted a review of indigenous tourism in Latin America. His ethnographic fieldwork offers insights into Latin American Indigenous communities with lessons from a specific case study on the Guna sustainable tourism model. The paper conceptualizes trends in Latin American Indigenous tourism and debates best/bad practice arising from cultural commodification before presenting reflections and findings from collaborative anthropological field work conducted in Guna Yala from 2003 to 2013. The Guna (1996) "Statute of Guna Tourism" enabled the Guna people to respond to growing visitor numbers via Indigenous-led planning and monitoring of the visitor sector (Pereiro *et al.*, 2012). Thus, the community could respond through involvement in the provision of accommodation, activities and retail development. While the Guna may shape tourism, rather than being shaped by tourism, they still grapple with social and environmental challenges. Pereiro also observes cultural changes being shaped by factors other than tourism. For example, modernization, with the expansion of digital media and urbanization, stresses the need for the empowerment of Indigenous peoples via their involvement in the governance of the regions they inhabit.

Amir *et al.* (2015) examined the resiliency of the rural communities in Malaysia with the help of the sustainability planning in rural tourism. The study covers the rural sustainable development background, the community resiliency elements and the role of the local government. The methodology includes site observation and extensive literature reviews. The findings of the research suggest that a sustainable tourism development in rural area will contribute to an improved resiliency within the local community. Some strategies are needed to ensure the sustainable development or rural tourism and to sustain the local community resiliency.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research,

as the main cost is involved in the executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

## FINDINGS

The results were grouped into various research gap categories namely as conceptual, contextual, and geographical.

The inherent gaps in existing body of knowledge show that little has been done as the data required for developing cultural industries is quite extensive given that it is a new area of study in France, hence no concrete point of reference is available for France. Actually, cultural statistics are not available as it is taken as a new area in France. Therefore, it is difficult to indicate whether cultural tourism in France is sustainable for tourism development and it is this gap that the study sought to fill.

Aranburu *et al.* (2016) who conducted a study on sustainable cultural tourism in urban destinations. The study was to analyze how central" the resources (museums, monuments, etc.) are and what the interactions between them are. Comprehending which factors influence visitors' urban mobility behavior is key to understanding tourists' consumption of space and their connections with the tourism assets of the city. This study ignored how specific cultural assets contributed to tourism development in France. Also, the study applied GPS technologies, network analysis, and surveys, as a mode of data collection. This depicted a methodological data since our current study will use desk study method.

In addition, geographical data can be identified from the research done by (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2017) who conducted a study on sustainable tourism development and residents' perceptions in world heritage site destinations. The study focused on Malaysia's Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site (WHS) while our current study focuses on France.

A study done by Pereiro (2016) who conceptualized trends in Latin American Indigenous tourism and debates best/bad practice arising from cultural commodification. Failed to establish the contribution of selected cultural assets for sustainable tourism development.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

The research study concluded that while cultural tourism could provide the country with economic benefits, careful planning and implementation policies are required in order to limit its negative impacts. Treating cultural assets as tourism products does not simply mean pricing and selling them in the market. It is about the initiative to proudly introduce unique cultural products to the tourists both locally and internationally and to disseminate this information in accessible in informative ways. This will ensure that the tourists gain a wealth of experience by the end of their visit, and at the same time, to feel that their trip was enjoyable. In addition, cultural products need to be developed in such a way that management can reduce potentially harmful impacts on the local communities, and at the same time, protect their interests and well-being. In this sense all parties involved must make much greater efforts to mobilize local assets to directly benefit local communities in the name of sustainable development. It is not enough for them to participate in economic activities alone.

The sustainability of the cultural tourism industry depends to a considerable extent upon the preservation of cultural and social attributes. In other words, it is time that the authorities at Local government as well as National government delivered in practice what the co-operatives societies claims as its missions and objectives of cultural tourism development. This means to develop and manage cultural tourism in a sustainable manner. The concluding remarks bring the study in a better understanding in development of sustainable cultural tourism in France, with the notion that tourism development encompassing non-replaceable assets which should be practiced in a sustainable manner.

## Recommendations

There is need for establishment of a clear policy on sustainable cultural tourism that could provide bases for development control, decision-making, implementation, and guidance for the public, individuals, and the local community. On the other hand, it is also essential that these decision-making and planning processes are flexible, so that they are responsive to the changing circumstances caused by the tourism environment.

A re-evaluation of education and teaching of culture and cultural tourism study in schools. Education, in this sense, would be geared more towards disseminating knowledge and information about the subject matters. It is hoped that education will stimulate public interest and support for the preservation of cultural assets, and at the same time, enhance the public's general understanding of cultural assets itself.

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