

COURSE N.2: Destination Management

Module 3: Socio-cultural Impacts and Local Benefits

Culture as an integral aspect of travel experiences



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About the Speaker

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The Dual Role of Culture

“In tourism, culture functions both as a **resource and a product**” (Richards, 1996).

- Treating culture as a product can lead to **loss of meaning or authenticity**, but it can also support preservation efforts through **funding and visibility**.
- The key for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) is to find a balance — **leveraging cultural assets responsibly** without degrading them through over-commercialization.



Photo: Adina Nicoleta Candrea

Visitor at Feldioara fortress - Romania

Culture as a Resource

Culture is seen as a **reservoir** of elements (e.g. traditions, art forms, heritage sites, festivals), from which tourist destinations can draw in order to attract and engage visitors.



Photo: Adina Nicoleta Candrea

Traditional dances (caluti) at winter festival in Vatra Dornei - Romania

Culture as a Resource

Example: A medieval town's architecture and religious festivals are cultural resources that can be curated for tourism — even though they were not originally created for tourism.

Key Considerations:

- **Inherent value:** Culture has intrinsic worth to a community, regardless of its touristic appeal.
- **Non-renewable aspects:** Some cultural elements (e.g. sacred rituals) are delicate and can degrade if overexploited.



Photo: Adina Nicoleta Candrea

Alma Vii village and fortified church - Romania

Culture as a Product

When culture is organized, packaged, marketed, and sold to tourists, it becomes a product — a consumable experience tailored to visitor expectations.



Photo: Adina Nicoleta Candrea

Visitors at Ecaterina's Gate in Brasov - Romania

Culture as a Product

Example: A traditional dance performed on request for tourists at a hotel becomes a product — it is repurposed from its original context to meet visitor demand.

Key Considerations:

- **Revenue generation:** These products are part of the tourism value chain and can support local economies if managed sustainably.
- **Commodification:** Over-commercialisation can lead to cultural experiences losing their emotional and social significance.



Photo: Adina Nicoleta Candrea

Traditional dancers in Brasov - Romania

How can DMOs find the right balance?

Example: Preservation of traditions - The Alpine Folk Music and Dance in Tyrol and Bavarian Alps

- Local clubs (Trachtenvereine) and music groups help **keep traditions alive**, as well as many families and schools, who **teach children** traditional dances.
- **Festivals** like the Almabtrieb (cattle drive), in Austria, Tegernsee or International Schuhplattler Festival in Bavaria involve large **public performances** of dance, music, and costumes.
- Tyrol region **integrates folk culture into cultural tourism** packages while trying to keep its authenticity and ensure performances are respectful and community-led.

How can DMOs find the right balance?

Example: Revitalization of crafts - Lace Making in Bruges – Belgium

- Visit Bruges (DMO) highlights lace as **a symbol of local craftsmanship** in brochures, social media, and travel itineraries.
- Kantcentrum (Lace Centre) Bruges is a museum and training center which offers daily live demonstrations of traditional bobbin lace making, **included in the city pass** (Museum Brugge Card), drawing heritage-focused tourists.
- Bruges Lace Fair (Kantmarkt): Annual **open-air lace fair** attracting international visitors and craftspeople.

How can DMOs find the right balance?

Example: Funding for heritage sites - The Colosseum Restoration – Italy

- The Colosseum, a global icon drawing 7 million+ visitors annually, is managed by *Parco archeologico del Colosseo* (Colosseum Archaeological Park), which **reinvests ticket revenue** into conservation and services.
- **Special access tickets** (like underground tours or night visits) generate higher income that directly supports restoration.
- Restoration projects are now accompanied by interpretive signage and exhibitions about the conservation process itself, aimed at **building awareness** of heritage stewardship and turning visitors into allies of preservation.

Tangible Culture



Monuments, museums,
artifacts



Historical
landscapes Historical
landscapes

Photo: OpenAI, ChatGPT

Examples:

- The Colosseum - Italy
- The Louvre Museum - France
- Stonehenge - United Kingdom
- Timber-framed houses in Alsace - France (traditional architecture)
- Cinque Terre - Italy (historical landscapes)

Intangible Culture



Language,
music, dance



Food
traditions



Spiritual
practices,
storytelling



Examples:

- The Gaelic language - Scotland
- Fado – Portugal (music)
- Flamenco – Spain (dance)
- Italian pizza-making
- The pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (spiritual practices)
- Greek mythology (storytelling)

Photo: OpenAI, ChatGPT



DISCOVER ȚARA DORNELOR

LET THE ADVENTURE BEGIN

EXPERIENCES

USEFUL INFO

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Painting eggs

In Țara Dornelor, the craft of painting eggs has been practised for more than 100 years, and it is closely connected to the embroidery art from the traditional Romanian folk costumes, being a valuable treasure of Bucovina traditional culture. In the well-known museum village, namely Ciocănești, over 30 women paint eggs throughout the year. You can visit their houses to learn the secrets of this art, and the painted egg that you will create will weight as the best soul memory for you.

Workshop organizer: Marilena Niculiță,
traditional crafter, manager of The Painted
Eggs Museum from Ciocănești.

Phone: 0744 589 977



Photo: Screenshot of the Crafts section on Tara Dornelor website: <https://taradornelor.ro/en/crafts-and-museums/>

Visitor Management in Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism brings economic benefits but can, when not managed effectively, **strain local communities and cultural integrity**.

- **Challenges:** Overcrowding, commercialization, and cultural erosion.
- **Possible Negative Impact:** Loss of authenticity, displacement, and loss of sense of place.



Photo: Adina Nicoleta Candrea
Pharaoh statue for photos, AFI Mall - Romania

Visitor Management Tactics

- **Timed Entry:** Implementing specific entry times for visitors ensures a more controlled flow of people and a more enjoyable experience (e.g. At the Vatican Museums, visitors are required to book a specific time slot online).
- **Visitor Caps:** Setting a maximum number of visitors for a site per day can help protect it from overuse (e.g. Alhambra Palace, Granada – Spain – max. 6600; Santorini, Greece – Port of Thira - max. 8000 cruise passengers).
- **Guided Tours:** Offering structured guided tours can ensure groups are not dispersed in a way that might harm the site or overwhelm local resources (e.g. Neuschwanstein Castle – Bavaria, Germany; Český Krumlov Castle – Czech Republic).

Community Involvement & Preserving Identity

- Effective visitor management requires **working with local communities** to ensure tourism benefits them.
- Local communities should **actively participate** in presenting their heritage authentically, maintaining its meaning, dignity, and connection to their daily lives.
- DMOs should ensure local communities **retain control** over how their cultural traditions, values, and practices are represented and shared.



Photo: Adina Nicoleta Candrea

Traditional haymaking in Tara Lapusului - Romania

Example: Colinele Transilvaniei ecotourism destination, Romania



Villages



Guests



In the Transylvanian villages, people preserve their cultural heritage, as one preserves a gift passed down through generations. By supporting our local craftsmen and women, you can bring home a piece of this heritage. The local crafts are created with passion and love, and are made solely by hand.

The fabric of traditional life

In Viscri, a female artisanal community handcrafts knitted clothing and decorations, using techniques passed on by the village elders. These wonderful handmade creations are sold in the artisanal boutique in the village main square. Meanwhile, in the village of Mălâncrav, craftswomen Elena Neagu and Maria Nistor manually weave carpets and curtains with traditional patterns – these too are an important piece of Transylvanian history.

A still-burning centuries-old craft

Coal Valley, also known as Bocșa, is located outside the village of Viscri – here, you can witness a centuries-old craft: the making of charcoal, done by combining slow-burning wood with peat and straw. A horse-drawn carriage ride through the valley of the coal-makers is a transcendent experience that is not to be missed.

The iron hands

The village blacksmith workshop takes you back in time. Here you can witness iron horseshoes and tools being made from century-old models.

Photo: Screenshot of the Crafts and products section on Experience Transylvania website:
<https://www.experiencetransylvania.ro/experience/crafts-and-products/>

Conclusion

- Culture is the story travelers want to experience
- Tourism must be a tool for preservation
- Empower local people, not just promote places



Photo: Adina Nicoleta Candrea

Locals wearing traditional costumes from Tara Lapusului - Romania

**Thank you
for your attention!**



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