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Том III



5-7 ноември 2026 г.

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MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL-RELIGIOUS HERITAGE: HISTORICAL, SPIRITUAL, AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF FÁTIMA AND CZĘSTOCHOWA

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the management of cultural-religious heritage through a comparative study of two major Catholic pilgrimage centers: Fátima in Portugal and Częstochowa in Poland. Both sites constitute complex heritage assets that combine historical significance, religious meaning, and global cultural value. This study uses a qualitative methodology based on the analysis of bibliographic sources. The study examines the historical trajectories and spiritual narratives that have shaped each sanctuary, as well as their evolving role in national and international contexts. Special attention is given to management strategies that address the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, the organization of large-scale pilgrimages, and the integration of religious tourism with sustainable cultural heritage policies. By highlighting governance structures, stakeholder engagement, and international collaboration, the analysis underscores the challenges and opportunities inherent in managing living religious heritage in a globalized world.

Keywords: religious heritage management; pilgrimage; Fátima; Częstochowa; sustainable tourism; cultural identity; cultural diversity; international cooperation

JEL: Z1

1. Introduction

Fátima (Portugal) and Częstochowa/Jasna Góra (Poland) are paradigmatic Marian sanctuaries where religious, historical-national, and global-tourism logics intersect. Research on comparable sites highlights tensions between worship and heritage, local identity and mass tourism, and spiritual experience and economic development.

Częstochowa's Jasna Góra became a „spiritual capital of Poland" through centuries of Marian devotion and key political events (e.g., defense against the Swedes, Lviv oath), fusing national and religious symbolism in the sanctuary's landscape and ritual life (Liro et al., 2022; Repelewicz & Mamyan, 2025; Sołjan, 2024). Polish pilgrimage centres overall function as symbolic religious landscapes where patriotic monuments, plaques, and flags are integral to the sacred ensemble and nation-building (Liro et al., 2022). Similar patterns of identity

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reinforcement via reconstructed and valorised shrines are seen in Europe and Africa (Kleinhempel & Nicolaides, 2024; Lo Faro & Miceli, 2021). Pilgrimages have historically served as powerful cultural and spiritual practices, but their significance extends far beyond religious devotion (Reader, 2007). They play an important role in shaping regional development, influencing tourism strategies, and promoting heritage preservation. Understanding these impacts requires an integrated approach that considers economic, social, and cultural dimensions. Pilgrimages contribute significantly to the economic growth of the regions in which they occur (Silva, 2023). The arrival of large numbers of pilgrims stimulates local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, transportation services, and retail shops. Employment opportunities increase as a result, and the demand for infrastructure improvements, such as roads, public transport, and public facilities, often accelerates (Vijayanand, 2012). Culturally, pilgrimages reinforce local identity by maintaining traditions, crafts, and festivals associated with sacred sites. Socially, they encourage community cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and shared experiences among both locals and visitors (Aruljothi & Ramaswamy, 2019).

Managing pilgrimages as a form of tourism requires strategic planning and coordination. Effective pilgrimage management includes regulating visitor numbers, ensuring adequate accommodation and transportation, providing informative and interpretive services, and maintaining safety and accessibility (Saayman et al., 2014; Shimazaki & Wagner, 2005).

Modern technology increasingly supports these goals through route planning apps, real-time crowd monitoring, and online booking systems. Marketing strategies also play an important role, as they must balance the spiritual and cultural significance of the pilgrimage site with its potential as a tourist destination. Collaboration among religious authorities, local governments, tourism boards, and community stakeholders is essential. Sustainable pilgrimage management ensures that sites remain accessible, safe, and meaningful while generating long-term economic and social benefits(Shinde, 2007). Pilgrimages are closely linked to both tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage includes historical buildings, monuments, and sacred architecture, while intangible heritage encompasses rituals, folklore, music, and local traditions (Di Giovine & Garcia-Fuentes, 2016). Heritage management in pilgrimage contexts focuses on conserving these assets while accommodating visitors. Effective heritage management involves preservation, documentation, and education, along with policies that prevent the commercialization or degradation of cultural and spiritual values. Sustainable heritage management seeks to balance the needs of pilgrims and tourists with the protection of cultural and spiritual resources (Bajdor & Starostka-Patyk, 2024). When implemented properly, it allows sites to thrive economically while preserving their historical and cultural significance for future generations (Shimazaki & Wagner, 2005; Sizer, 1999).

The Table 1 summarizes the key benefits, challenges, and management strategies associated with pilgrimages, highlighting their impact on regional development, tourism, and heritage preservation.

Table 1. Key aspects of pilgrimages: benefits, challenges, and management strategies

Aspect	Key Benefits	Main Challenges	Management Strategies
Regional development	Economic growth, job creation, support for local businesses (hotels, restaurants, transport), infrastructure development (roads, public transport, facilities)	Overcrowding during major pilgrimage events, environmental pressure, risk of excessive commercialization	Strategic regional planning, infrastructure investment, involvement of local communities and authorities
Pilgrimage and tourism management	Enhanced visitor experience, improved accessibility and safety, increased global visibility of pilgrimage sites	Visitor congestion, seasonality of pilgrimages, logistical and organizational difficulties	Visitor flow management, use of modern technologies (apps, crowd monitoring, online booking), cooperation between religious institutions and tourism authorities
Heritage and cultural identity	Preservation of tangible heritage (shrines, monuments, sacred architecture) and intangible heritage (rituals, traditions, festivals), strengthening local and national identity	Damage to heritage sites due to high visitor numbers, loss of authenticity, commercialization of sacred spaces	Heritage conservation programs, educational and interpretive initiatives, policies protecting cultural and spiritual values, participation of local communities

Source: Own elaboration.

The aim of the article is to analyze the role of Marian sanctuaries - Fátima in Portugal and Częstochowa/Jasna Góra in Poland - as places where religion, cultural heritage, national identity, and pilgrimage tourism intersect. The article seeks to demonstrate how pilgrimages influence regional development, tourism management, and the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage. At the same time, it examines the main benefits and challenges associated with the growing number of pilgrims and visitors, as well as the management strategies that help maintain a balance between the spiritual, cultural, and economic dimensions of these sacred sites.

2. The religious heritage of Częstochowa (Poland) and Fátima (Portugal)

2.1. The religious heritage of Częstochowa

Founded in 1382 by Pauline monks from Hungary under Duke Vladislaus II of Opole, the Jasna Góra Monastery became an apostolic pilgrimage center housing its most precious treasure: the Black Madonna icon (Jasna Góra-Monastery n.d.). Managed through the „Jasna Góra Charism“ emphasized by St. John

Paul II, the icon was formally declared „Queen of Poland“ by King John II Casimir Vasa in 1656 after surviving the Swedish Deluge (Jasna Góra-Monastery n.d.); (America Needs Fatima, 2026 n.d.). As a „fortress-monastery,“ Jasna Góra features massive walls, bastions, a 106-meter bell tower, and the Baroque Basilica of the Assumption, rebuilt in 1690–1693 after a fire (Repelewicz et al., 2025: 180). Spatial management balances silence with high visitor traffic, maintaining traditional „monastic etiquette“ in the Chapel of the Mother of God. Nearby Błonia, Staszic, and 3 Maja parks serve as green buffers between the city and sanctuary (Tubulewicz – Michalczuk, 2019); (Šimičević, et al., 2024). To reconcile medieval layout with modern industrial and religious demands, Częstochowa adopted a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) in November 2023 for the Silesian Voivodeship's Northern Sub-region. The SUMP priorities include (Repelewicz et al., 2025:180):

- Integrated transport systems: reducing environmental impact by unifying traffic networks.
- Traffic diversion: reconstructing the DK-91 and DK-46 routes to redirect heavy traffic away from the city center and Jasna Góra.
- Sustainable urbanism: promoting community spaces around sacred architecture.

As symbols of faith, resilience, and unity, Częstochowa and the Black Madonna remain vital to Polish cultural identity, historically sustaining national heritage and continuity through foreign occupations and partitions.

2.2. The religious heritage of Fátima

Fátima, located in Portugal's Centro region (Ourém), is the nation's premier Marian sanctuary. Its cultural heritage centers on Marian devotion, iconography, and pilgrimage. Between 1916 and 1917, three shepherd children - Francisco, Jacinta, and Lúcia, experienced six apparitions in Cova da Iria carrying messages of peace and the rosary (Shrines of Europe n.d. a). Lúcia interpreted the apparitions and the three-part „secret“ (Von Klimo 2022), which included visions of hell, World War II predictions, and a third part held by the Sanctuary (De Almeida and Silva 2025: 219). Following the 1917 „Miracle of the Sun,“ the site evolved to include the Chapel of the Apparitions, Pius XII Square, the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, and the Basilica housing the children's tombs. Since 1917, Fátima has seen immense pilgrimage growth, hosted multiple popes (Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis), and celebrated the canonization of Jacinta and Francisco during its 2017 centenary, drawing 9 million visitors. Driven by independent travelers, ~70% of whom are Portuguese (Roque and Forte 2018: 65; De Almeida and Silva 2025: 220), visitor numbers reached 5 million in 2022 and 6.8 million in 2023 (De Almeida and Silva 2025: 220). Beyond shaping Portuguese faith and 20th-century political behavior (Manuel 2002), Fátima's devotional network extends globally (Duarte 2024: 203). Despite mass gathering, security, and health challenges (Fino and Andrade

2018: 198-199; Almeida and Silveira 2019), the sanctuary maintains an organized, secure, and spiritual atmosphere (StowarzyszenieKultury Chrześcijań skiejim. PiotraSkargi n.d.).

Pilgrimage intensity is influenced by the pandemic (De Almeida and Silva 2025: 220), visits from the pilgrim statue to parishes (Heitor and Duarte 2020: 11), interfaith gender dynamics among Hindu and Muslim pilgrims (Von Klimo 2022: 1, 16-17), and macroeconomic factors like GDP, unemployment, and globalization (Belucio et al. 2019). This influx reshaped Fátima's spatial and functional structure (Sołjan and Liro 2021). Jointly managed over time by religious and municipal authorities (Roque and Forte 2018: 64), urban developments include (Roque and Forte 2018: 59-67):

- A hospital-sanatorium,
- Conversion of private homes into residential units,
- Travel, brokerage, and transportation services,
- Hotel and catering infrastructure,
- Devotional stalls, souvenir shops, and museums.

2.3. Cooperation between Częstochowa and Ourem/Fátima

The legacy of Fátima in Polish culture is symbolically tied to the 1946 consecration of the nation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Jasna Góra, modeled on Pope Pius XII's 1942 act fulfilling Our Lady of Fátima's request (Bachanek 2017: 161). Institutionally, Częstochowa and Ourém/Fátima are sister cities and members of the „Shrines of Europe" association alongside Altötting, Einsiedeln, Loreto, Lourdes, and Mariazell (Shrines of Europe n.d. b). This network of Marian cities, sharing similar socio-economic and urban development levels, collaborates on pilgrimage congresses, international tourism fairs, promotional brochures, and youth initiatives like „Let's Build Europe" (Lupa n.d.).

Their partnership aims to elevate sanctuary cities in tourism, create a platform for cultural, educational, and sports exchanges, and establish a unified marketing strategy, including a planned European Cultural Route of Cities of Sanctuaries to secure EU and national funding (Wroński 2019; Błoński 2020). Additional goals focus on heritage promotion, creative innovation, strengthening European values, and fostering peace dialogue (Shrines of Europe n.d.). Specific bilateral activities between Częstochowa and Ourém/Fátima include (Częstochowa n.d.):

- International Pilgrimage Congresses,
- Environmental seminars on preserving pilgrimage sites,
- Cultural exchanges like the „Majowa Nutka" and Inter-School Song festivals,
- Joint stands at BTL Lisbon and TT Warsaw tourism fairs,
- International youth meetings under „Let's Build Europe."

Despite these administrative connections, a notable research gap exists regarding academic literature on the cooperation between Fátima and Często-

chowa, as current coverage remains largely restricted to institutional municipal websites and Shrines of Europe materials.

3. The management of religious heritage at Fátima and Częstochowa

The management of religious heritage at Fátima and Częstochowa demonstrates how political context, infrastructure investment, and spiritual preservation strategies shape site development across historical, spiritual, and international dimensions. Historically, political regimes fundamentally determined development trajectories: Fátima experienced uninterrupted growth under Portugal's fascist regime (1928-1974) which used religion as an ideological instrument (Ambrósio, et al., 2019), while Częstochowa suffered infrastructure deprivation under communist suppression, only reviving after democratization.

Hovever, nowadays religious tourism destinations receive approximately 300 million visitors worldwide each year, generating an estimated $18 billion in revenue. For cities like Fátima and Częstochowa, the sanctuary is the primary driver of the local economy, providing jobs and tax revenue that fund city development (Alves & Pasin, 2025). In Częstochowa, for example, the hospitality industry provides a wide range of accommodation bases, from luxury hotels to budget-friendly pilgrim houses, ensuring that the city is accessible to a diverse range of visitors. In Fátima, the Economics and Finance Department of the sanctuary manages a multi-million-euro operation that includes product sales, publishing, and the maintenance of extensive pilgrim welcome facilities (Ingaldi, 2024). To manage the negative impacts of tourism, such as noise, overcrowding, and waste production, researchers in Częstochowa have applied the „Critical Incident Technique" (CIT) to evaluate resident satisfaction. This method gathers data through direct interviews with residents living near the sanctuary to identify specific „positive and negative incidents" that affect their quality of life (Ingaldi, 2024). Between 2009 and 2011, the Jasna Góra Monastery underwent its most comprehensive restoration project in history, titled „The Sacred Pearl: Complex Restoration of the Pauline Monastery Building". This project was significant not only for its technical scope but for its funding model, which included a €8.5 million investment from the European Union's European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (European Commission, 2015). The technical management of this project involved:

- Structural stabilization: Addressing cracks and wall dampness that had developed due to the heavy turmoil the complex had endured over centuries.
- Artistic renovation: Meticulous work on the walls and ceiling of the Baroque basilica, including gilding, decorative molding, and the conservation of easel paintings.
- Archaeological documentation: The discovery and preservation of 15th-century Gothic church walls beneath the modern floor, which were integrated into the site's historical narrative.

- Scientific testing: Technological tests conducted on the Black Madonna icon during 20th and 21st-century conservations to determine the original paint composition and the effectiveness of previous restoration efforts.

Across religions, the „core business“ of religious heritage management is maintaining a sense of place that enables deep spiritual or religious experience, even under high visitor pressure (Coleman & Olsen, 2021; Pande & Shi, 2023; Kandil, 2024). Studies stress spiritually trained guides, integration of liturgy and interpretation, and protection of intangible practices (rituals, soundscapes, processions) as key to spiritual sustainability (Aulet & Duda, 2020; Aulet & Vidal, 2018; Ristić & Ćulafić, 2025; Kandil, 2024). Accessibility and tourism infrastructure can support or erode spiritual atmosphere. Lower accessibility often correlates with stronger spiritual sustainability, while highly accessible sites require careful management systems to protect sacred character (Aulet & Duda, 2020). Residents around Częstochowa report both economic benefits and serious nuisances from mass pilgrimage flows, underscoring the need to balance visitor services with community well-being (Ingaldi, 2024).

International heritage discourse (UNESCO, EU, ICOMOS) now frames religious sites as both living religious heritage and cultural assets, calling for participatory, community-based governance and dialogue between conservators and faith communities (Lo Faro & Miceli, 2021; El-Refai & El-Habashi, 2021; Lixinski, 2020). International law’s coupling of heritage instruments with freedom-of-religion norms offers tools for safeguarding religious practice while resisting narrow nationalism (Lixinski, 2020).

Table 2 summarizes the key dimensions of religious heritage management at the Marian sanctuaries of Fátima and Częstochowa. The comparison highlights how historical and political contexts have shaped the development of these sites, influencing infrastructure, pilgrimage practices, and their role in national and international religious landscapes. While both sanctuaries aim to preserve a strong spiritual atmosphere, they face similar challenges related to increasing visitor numbers, tourism infrastructure, and the need to balance religious functions with heritage protection. As shown in the table, effective management requires cooperation between religious authorities, local communities, and heritage institutions in order to ensure both spiritual sustainability and long-term cultural preservation.

As global environmental pressures increase, the management of religious heritage sites has begun to prioritize sustainability through the „Green Pilgrimage“ movement. This involves influencing the behavior of millions of pilgrims to „care for the environment and reconnect with the natural world (Vaishnava & Kumar, 2026).

Sustainable management practices at these sites include (Šimičević, et al., 2024):

- Energy efficiency: The integration of renewable energy sources, such as solar power in the Basilica of the Holy Trinity, and the adoption of „smart waste systems“ and LED lighting in city-wide infrastructure.
- Environmental education: Providing pilgrims with a „traveller's code of conduct“ that emphasizes the „5 R's“ (Rethink, Reduce, Refuse, Reuse, Recycle) plus a sixth „R“ for „Respect“ for local ecosystems.
- Biosphere sustainable certification: The pursuit of international benchmarks for sustainability, as seen with Portuguese operators who prioritize eco-friendly accommodations and luggage transfers that minimize CO2 emissions.
- Habitat protection: Managing the impact on biodiversity, especially in Polish „green belts“ and Portuguese nature conservation areas, to ensure that mass gatherings do not lead to long-term environmental degradation.

Table 2. Comparative dimensions of religious heritage management at Fátima and Częstochowa

Dimension	Fátima (Portugal)	Częstochowa / Jasna Góra (Poland)	Key Implications
Historical and Political Context	Development supported during Portugal's fascist regime (1928–1974), which promoted religion as part of national ideology.	Development constrained during the communist period, when religious expression and infrastructure expansion were limited; revival occurred after democratization.	Political systems significantly influence the development, infrastructure, and public role of religious heritage sites.
Spiritual Experience and Sense of Place	Strong emphasis on maintaining spiritual atmosphere through liturgy, pilgrim rituals, and interpretation for international visitors.	Deep connection between Marian devotion, national identity, and historical memory within the sacred landscape.	Preserving the spiritual character of the site is essential despite growing tourism pressure.
Accessibility and Tourism Infrastructure	Highly developed tourism infrastructure supporting large numbers of international pilgrims.	Significant pilgrimage flows, especially national pilgrimages; local communities experience both economic benefits and social pressures.	Infrastructure development must balance accessibility with the preservation of sacred character and local quality of life.
International Heritage and Governance	Recognized as a global pilgrimage destination within international religious tourism networks.	Strong national symbolic significance combined with growing international recognition.	Cooperation between religious institutions, public authorities, and heritage organizations is necessary for sustainable management.

Source: Own elaboration.

The future of heritage management in Fátima and Częstochowa will likely be defined by „integrated public policies“ that treat religious and leisure tourism as part of a single sustainable ecosystem. This requires a proactive approach from city authorities to „effectively utilize the potential“ of religious tourism

while protecting the „sembiance of normalcy“ for residents. By combining traditional spiritual values with modern technological and ecological standards, these sanctuaries can continue to serve as „spiritual refuges“ for a globalized world, ensuring that their historical and international dimensions remain as vibrant and relevant in the future as they have been for centuries (Ingaldi, 2024; Alves & Pasin, 2025).

4. Conclusions

Fátima and Częstochowa are not isolated sanctuaries, they are key nodes in a global network of „soft power“ and religious diplomacy. Their management is increasingly influenced by international collaborations and the „spiritual tourism“ market (Stefko &Nowak, 2014).

This study highlights that pilgrimage centres such as Fátima and Częstochowa/Jasna Góra function as complex religious heritage hubs where spiritual, historical, national, and international tourism dimensions intersect. Their development has been shaped by diverse political contexts, infrastructure investments, and strategies aimed at preserving the spiritual character of sacred places. Effective management of such sites therefore requires balancing multiple objecttives: protecting living religious practices, maintaining a sense of place that supports authentic spiritual experiences, and addressing the economic and social pressures generated by large pilgrimage groups(Bajdor & Starostka-Patyk, 2024). Successful management also depends on coordinated approaches to regional development, visitor management, and heritage protection, including the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible cultural elements(Di Giovine & Garcia-Fuentes, 2016). The partnership between Częstochowa and Fátima represents a significant example of institutional cooperation between two of Europe’s most important Marian pilgrimage centres (Ingaldi, 2024). Joint participation in international pilgrimage congresses, cultural and music festivals, environmental seminars, tourism fairs, and youth exchange programs demonstrates how local governments and religious institutions can work together to strengthen spiritual engagement, cultural exchange, and tourism development. These initiatives illustrate the potential of transnational collaboration to enhance the visibility and resilience of pilgrimage destinations within broader international heritage Framework (Lo Faro & Miceli; Lixinski, 2020). At the same time, the analysis reveals a noticeable gap in academic research concerning this cooperation. Despite the existence of institutional partnerships, there is limited scholarly examination of their broader cultural and religious implications. In particular, the role of shared Marian devotional practices that connect both centres beyond formal agreements remains underexplored. Existing information on the collaboration between Częstochowa and Ourém/Fátima is largely scattered across non-academic sources, indicating a need for systematic documentation and more comprehensive analytical studies (Reader, 2007; Shinde, 2007). Addressing this gap would contribute not only to the academic field of pilgrimage and heritage studies but also to practical decision-making in the management of

religious heritage. Greater understanding of transnational pilgrimage cooperation could support more effective administrative strategies, strengthen cultural exchange, and enhance the socio-economic benefits of pilgrimage tourism for local communities (Di Giovine & Garcia-Fuentes, 2016; Silva, 2023). Future research should therefore explore several key areas, including institutional cooperation, shared religious practices, tourism and cultural impacts, and strategies for sustainable heritage management.

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