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International Practices for Developing and Using Regional Tourism Potential: Governance Instruments and Policy Lessons for Uzbekistan's Regions

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Abstract: Regional tourism potential becomes a strategic driver of expansion if domestic demand is small and regional economies are determined by specialized industries. Drawing from the comparative cases of France, China and Türkiye, this article synthesises transferable policy instruments for developing and the effective use of tourism potential. The aim is to take out a toolkit with potential to adjust on regional contexts in Uzbekistan (Bukhara focused). A qualitative comparative method is employed: cases are mapped along a dimension of governance architecture, including legal and program mechanisms, investment incentives, and shock-recovery measures. Results show three robust mechanisms. First, with having a legally defined coordination operator, multi-actor destination governance enhances statistics, product development, quality control and promotion (Atout France model and Tourism Code anchoring-Fr). Secondly, medium-term programming relative to wider socio-economic outcomes and local demand facilitates scale & agility (China's programme cycles, cluster / route logic and rapid onboarding modes (for example, online or "cloud" tourism)). Third, incentivising roadmap with some measurable targets promotes earlier investments while making regional product diversification other than flagship hubs (Türkiye tourism encouragement framework and national strategy planning). As for the implications for Uzbekistan, the discussion notes the above four areas that will require adaptation: defining roles across agencies, creation of a regional project pipeline, penetration of digital services (bookings, ticketing, QR code interpretation), and monitoring of congestion and quality. Finally, the article ends with brief recommendations for regional tourism policy design and implementation.

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1. Introduction

Regional economic development in many countries is strongly influenced by territorial specialization and the division of labour. Where the internal market is small, specialized sectors become strategic sources of income and employment [1]. Tourism is a policy-sensitive specialized sector: it links infrastructure, hospitality services, cultural assets, transport connectivity, and small business development, while generating spillovers for construction, retail, agriculture, and creative industries. For sub-regional territories, the ability to transform resources into a competitive tourism product determines whether tourism potential becomes real value added or remains underutilized.

At the national level as well as within the regions, tourism development measures have been further strengthened through the adoption of national and regional programs, and within the scope of the tourism sector, it is integrated into the development program of the country. However, promotion is not enough to keep growth going and spread it to other regions. And this will be an interconnected governance model, where long-term programming and investment conditions, along with an evidence-based monitoring system, are needed to mitigate seasonality and overloads, and building resilience to shocks is needed.

The question of the research is: what are the international practices that are most successful in transferring tourism potential into balanced regional development, and how can these practices be adopted in the regions of Uzbekistan? France is chosen due to its multi-actor governance with legal anchoring; China for its program-driven scaling and domestic-demand stabilization; and Türkiye for its incentive-supported strategic roadmaps with diversification—as examples of different but successful policy logics [2]. The paper is framed as applied comparative policy research – it does not assert causal impacts but maps instruments that are recurrent in high-performing systems and elaborates the circumstances under which these may be transferable to other regions. Finally, the framing of the analysis is carried out in terms of regional balance: More and more, international leaders are seeing the distribution of flows, accessibility of different groups, and quality of experience for visitors as integral to competitiveness. For heritage regions such as Bukhara, this implies that policy should aim to extend the length of stay, diversify itineraries across districts, and link tourism development with local crafts, gastronomy, and community-based services rather than concentrating benefits in a narrow set of sites [3].

Literature Review

Studies on regional tourism development typically emphasize three connected dimensions. The first is governance and coordination: destination performance depends on collaboration among ministries, local authorities, destination management bodies, professional associations, and private firms. This lack of coordination creates siloed marketing, duplicated spending, disparate quality, and a clunky response to crises. Institutional coordination through a national tourism development operator, Atout France, is often cited for France, providing an integrated offer of product development assistance and international promotion.

Strategic Programming: This is the second dimension. Through medium-term plans and regional programs, infrastructure, branding, skills, and SME support are aligned so that tourism is fully integrated into socioeconomic goals. China's experience illustrates the scale that program planning can reach: domestic tourism volumes reported for 2019 exceeded 6 billion trips, making internal demand and territorial planning central to tourism policy.

The third dimension is investment incentives and roadmaps. Tourism growth is constrained when investors face uncertainty in land, permitting, utilities pricing, taxation, and access to credit [4]. Türkiye's pathway is commonly associated with tourism encouragement instruments and national strategy documents that set measurable targets and support product diversification and regional balancing.

A practical gap remains in translating these strands into a compact, implementable toolbox for regions with emerging tourism systems. This article contributes by synthesizing instruments across cases and stating adaptation conditions for Uzbekistan's regions. In addition, the literature increasingly stresses that growth without territorial balance can generate congestion, resident dissatisfaction, and declining experience quality; therefore, policies must explicitly address dispersion of flows, service standards, and digital enablement as part of regional competitiveness [5].

2. Materials and Methods

A qualitative comparative case approach is used. Evidence is drawn from publicly available institutional and legal sources, policy documents, and international tourism communications for the selected cases. The analysis proceeds in three steps: (i) mapping governance architecture (key actors and coordination mechanisms); (ii) identifying policy instruments (legal regulation, strategic programs, incentives, crisis measures, and digital tools); and (iii) deriving transferability conditions and region-level implications relevant to Uzbekistan, including Bukhara. Case selection follows a maximum-variation logic: France represents mature EU destination governance with legal codification; China represents program-based scaling and domestic-tourism dominance; and Türkiye represents incentive-led expansion and strategic target setting [6]. The unit of analysis is not the country as a whole, but the set of instruments that can be operationalized at the regional level (roles, programs, incentives, digital tools, monitoring). Because the study is synthesis-oriented, it does not estimate econometric effects; instead, it formulates implementable mechanisms and specifies preconditions (institutional capacity, financing sources, stakeholder alignment).

3. Results

France: multi-actor governance with legal anchoring. France treats tourism as a cross-sector system rather than a single-agency domain. A central instrument is Atout France, which supports destination development and promotes France in international markets [7], [8]. The Tourism Code references Atout France as a *groupement d'intérêt économique* under ministerial supervision, indicating a formal legal basis for coordination [9]. This architecture helps consolidate stakeholders, improve market intelligence, and ensure continuity of policy across national, regional, and local levels.

A second transferable feature is the emphasis on quality management and diversified territorial products. The French approach supports the idea that national branding is strengthened when regions develop distinct offers and when visitor flows are distributed beyond a single metropolis. For emerging destinations, the key lesson is not to copy administrative titles, but to build routines: shared statistics, joint planning of promotion campaigns, and coordinated product packaging across transport, culture, and hospitality.

China: program planning, domestic-tourism orientation, and cluster logic. China's policy practice emphasizes multi-year programming and the integration of tourism with broader economic and social goals. Large-scale domestic demand (reported at more than 6 billion domestic trips in 2019) supports stability and enables redistribution of flows across territories [10]. A notable instrument is cluster or route-based development that creates a unified brand for groups of attractions, builds value chains, and stimulates employment in connected sectors. Digital formats such as online or "cloud" tourism were used to sustain interest and access during periods of mobility constraints [11].

One of the key learnings that is more practical is to frame the tourism programs to function as an instrument of social policy. Strategically located micro-infrastructure, skills upgrading, and local entrepreneurship regional initiatives can increase household income, particularly in rural areas, while maintaining traditions and local identity. In Uzbekistan, this applies to local and rural tourism around heritage cities, where it is possible to convert the authenticity of local culture into visitor experiences through proper interpretation, standards, and micro-investments.

Turkey: incentives, diversification, and tangible roadmaps. An incentive system as part of Türkiye's tourism policy that organizes tourism investments [12]. Quantified targets and strategies for enhancing service quality, infrastructure, and regional equity are laid out within the framework of strategic planning [13]. This combination supports rapid

capacity expansion and continued promotion while encouraging investment beyond established coastal hubs.

Table 1. Policy toolbox for regions: instruments and transferability conditions.

Instrument	What it does (brief)	Transferability condition for Uzbekistan
Coordination operator (DMO-type)	Unites stakeholders; improves data, standards, and promotion	Legal role clarity, stable funding, shared KPIs
3–5-year regional program	Aligns routes/clusters, events, skills, SMEs, and infrastructure	Measurable outputs; inter-agency plan; annual review
Investment incentive package	Reduces investor risk; speeds capacity and diversification	Transparent permits; targeted support; co-invest in access
Digital tourism services	Boosts access and resilience (booking, e-ticketing, QR)	Unified standards; interoperability; staff training
Monitoring dashboard	Tracks flows, quality, and congestion for fast corrections	Regular data collection; public reporting; action triggers

4. Discussion

Cross-case synthesis suggests that effective use of regional tourism potential requires three mechanisms working together: (1) a coordination operator with clearly defined roles; (2) program discipline through medium-term plans and regional initiatives; and (3) an investment environment that lowers transaction costs and rewards quality and diversification. Table 1 summarizes a practical toolbox and transferability conditions.

However, the most actionable implications for the regions of Uzbekistan and the context of Bukhara would be: In the first place, the governance of a destination should be multi-actor organized. Such a regional coordination platform (DMO-type) will connect various tourism administrations, municipalities, business associations, transport, culture, and digital service providers. France shows that coordination is a good idea if the functions are legally well delimited and when the operator is not only integrating product support but also promotion & statistics.

Second, regions need medium-term programs (3-5 years) with quantifiable results: a route/cluster portfolio, a calendar of events, service standards, staff training modules, and SME assistance tools. China's logic of programme then points to a linking of tourism measures to employment, local entrepreneurship, and inclusive development, whilst tapping digital channels to access and seasonality.

Third, regions should develop a pipeline of projects ready for investment. This signals the benefits of predictable zoning/land instruments, timely permits, strategic tax or fee relief, and co-investment in access infrastructure [14]. In Bukhara, this pipeline can prioritize: heritage interpretation services, last-mile mobility, visitor flow management, diversified accommodation, and rural tourism products tied to authentic traditions and household culture.

Fourth, monitoring must prevent overload and quality decline. Regions should track arrivals, occupancy, length of stay, spending proxies, service quality, and digital adoption (online booking, e-ticketing, QR-based interpretation). A compact dashboard supports fast policy corrections and protects the long-term sustainability of the regional tourism system.

Fifth, regions should institutionalize learning from pilots [15]. A small set of pilot districts or routes can be used to test incentives, digital services, and service standards,

after which effective tools can be scaled. This reduces implementation risk and supports the gradual improvement of administrative capacity.

5. Conclusion

The comparative review of France, China, and Türkiye demonstrates that converting tourism potential into regional development depends on institutional capacity and policy design more than on isolated projects. France illustrates the benefits of multi-actor governance anchored in a clear legal framework. China demonstrates the power of program planning, cluster logic, and digital formats supported by strong domestic demand. Turkey illustrates how incentives and quantifiable roadmap measures can speed up investment and diversification. For its regions, including Bukhara, an adaptable policy toolkit should consist of: a legally codified coordination structure, a regional strategy with specific outputs for the next 3–5 years, a number of bankable projects, and a monitoring dashboard based on facts. Such steps will help to spread the tourism benefits across wider territories, strengthen resilience, and maximise the regional value added from tourism.

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