

# ARCHITECTURAL SCIENCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

TRACES OF THE  
HISTORY

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## Application of a Cultural Route Evaluation Model (CREM) for Cultural Tourism in Case of Karaman

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism emerges as a popular and significant industry that affects various sectors. In today's world, innovation has led to qualitative changes in tourism, with a growing emphasis on culture-focused tourism. Cultural-based visits prioritize the built environment, making cultural resources, as components of the environment, closely related to tourism (Lasansky & McLaren, 2004). In the last decades, culture-based tourism routes have become very popular since they offer important opportunities for demonstrating new places, promote the city's brand value with new products and experiences. In this context especially developing countries with rich valuable and cultural heritage have more advantage for showing their potentials.

The Council of Europe created and organised the first and the most popular types of cultural routes and defined the trends of cultural tourism development. A considerable progress has been reached in the last years in small and medium scale. Besides cultural routes encourage the local communities, they also promote the awareness of cultural heritage, create important sources for local economy by promoting cultural heritage.

According to the ICOMOS Charter on Cultural routes (2005):

*“The consideration of cultural trails as a new concept or category does not conflict nor overlap with other categories or types of cultural properties—monuments, cities, cultural landscapes, industrial heritage, etc., that may exist within the orbit of a given cultural corridor. It simply includes them within a joint system which enhances their significance”*

(ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes, 2005).



Research indicates that cultural route evaluation has become a popular topic in recent years, leading stakeholders to develop various heritage assessment models that are continually updated and improved over time. Cultural routes, as a response to these endeavors, bring together multiple destinations under a common theme, contributing to regional development and serve as means to understand heritage values (Taşkan et al, 2020).

This study focuses on the city of Karaman in Anatolia, which has a multi-layered cultural structure and has been home to multiple civilizations, making it a potential destination for cultural tourism. The aim of the study is to integrate the city's heritage sites into tourism routes to promote its development and achieve the recognition it deserves, thus creating a vision for its future.

For this aim, a Cultural Route Evaluation Model (CREM) is applied for improving cultural tourism in Karaman. In the first step, a cultural route including important cultural heritage structures and areas was designed and proposed. Then main indicators and sub-indicators were determined for CREM Model. These indicators were asked to ten experts in order to determine the potential of the proposed cultural route. At the end of evaluation main values and tourism specific values are calculated of the proposed route. Regarding to these values, some suggestions were made for the future of Karaman cultural tourism development.

## **2. Material and Method**

This study addresses the integration of heritage sites with tourism activities for promotion of Karaman cultural heritage and tourism. In order to be able

to propose a cultural route, regional and local cultural heritage and their values in Karaman have been examined through on-site inspections, situational assessments, interpretation and photography. These values have been identified for experiencing the city's heritage sites through route-based tourism. Furthermore, in order to improve the effectiveness of policies concerning rural areas, a cultural route has been proposed then an evaluation model was applied to evaluate this route.

For evaluation of cultural route, the model developed by Božić and Tomić (2016) was mainly used in this study. As evaluation model called CREM (Cultural Route Evaluation Model) was asked to ten experts in order to evaluate the potential of the route. At the end of the evaluation, some recommendations were made for improving Karaman tourism potential in order to led the development of cultural tourism.

### **3. Cultural Tourism and Cultural Route**

#### **3.1. Cultural Tourism**

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism that involves understanding and experiencing a place's history and way of life, along with various cultural factors that can be presented within a specific context of travel. (Mousavi et al, 2016). The approach to cultural tourism can be seen as convergence of individuals supported, managed, and facilitated by various actors (Smith, 1992).

Among the emerging alternative tourism activities with changing tourism patterns, cultural tourism has been the most rapidly developing form of tourism. This is because it is learning-oriented and can be sustained throughout the year, rather than being seasonal, which motivates developed

and developing countries to focus on cultural tourism. In addition to its income-generating impact, cultural tourism has also been emphasized as a tourism type that plays a significant role in preserving cultural values from the perspective of countries, institutions, and organizations related to the subject (Davutoğlu, 2019).

Cultural tourism, by diversifying the range of tourist products, has become popular not only in well-known tourism destinations but also by expanding to a broader area through thematic routes, contributing to regional development. Additionally, it can transform the identity of a city and breathe new life and meanings into neglected spaces (Santana, 1997). However, it should be emphasized that the preservation of cultural heritage as a whole remains the primary concern of cultural tourism because with a well-developed cultural consciousness and planning, cultural tourism becomes a significant catalyst for carrying cultural heritage into the future (ÇEKÜL & Tarihi Kentler Birliği, 2012).

### **3.2. Cultural Route**

The idea of enabling people to rediscover their cultural practices has led to the concept of tourism being carried out in a route-based manner (Nagy, 2012). A cultural route is a local and national-scale transportation corridor that has gained significance by encompassing valuable cultural heritage sites, either established in the present or utilized in the past, created with the aim of enhancing conservation efforts and consisting of diverse elements of communication and exchange (Gül & Yılmaz, 2020). Cultural routes, by incorporating other cultural assets within a common system, foster a collaborative network and create an exceptional cultural environment

characterized by mutual understanding and tolerance (ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes, 2005) (Oikonomopoulou et al. 2016). Therefore, it is accurate to say that routes have an innovative, complex, and multi-dimensional structure.

Cultural routes were first noticed in Europe and were initiated by the Council of Europe with the aim of increasing public awareness and consciousness about cultural heritage (Meyer, 2004). Institutions such as the Council of Europe and ICOMOS work in harmony, developing rules and programs for the recognition, development, and management of routes and organizing meetings (Oikonomopoulou et al., 2016). In this context, a technical body has been established by the European Institute of Cultural Routes to coordinate joint efforts. Another significant development related to cultural routes is the publication of the Cultural Routes Charter by ICOMOS. The Charter emphasizes the necessity for created cultural routes to increase awareness while respecting the uniqueness and integrity of the area (Höbel & B. Akkurt, 2018). In summary, based on various examples of cultural route implementations, it can be observed that routes with narrative storytelling are more captivating, representing the qualitative representation of cultural heritage conservation practices (Chairatudomkul, 2008).

### **3.3. Cultural Route Evaluation Models and CREM**

There are numerous researches evaluating tourism from different perspectives. It is observed that early evaluation models were based on a more general system, focusing solely on the commercial values of tourist products and neglecting cultural, natural, conservation, and other values. As a result, new methods have been developed by enhancing existing models

and shifting the focus towards different tourism resources. Particularly in recent years, as heritage and route concepts have been emphasized, various heritage evaluation models have also shown development. However, these established heritage evaluation models are not considered comprehensive methods since they consider specific criteria. For this purpose, CREM was applied, which comprehensively evaluates heritage along with tourism values. This new and comprehensive model assesses heritage through various sub-indicators, providing an objective and realistic outcome (Božić & Tomić, 2015).

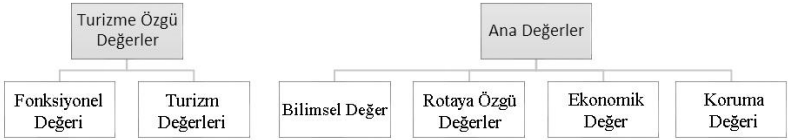
### **3.4. CREM**

Experts examining previously established models for the evaluation of cultural heritage developed the comprehensive CREM. The model was initially created and applied on the potential of the Roman Emperors' Route, which had not yet been introduced to the cultural tourism market in Serbia. The key distinguishing feature of CREM from other methods is its comprehensive set of sub-indicators, enabling the attainment of objective and realistic outcomes. Through these sub-indicators, it becomes possible to identify obstacles in areas with potential but requiring development and to reveal the advantages and disadvantages of new routes. As a result, investment and planning decisions can be guided effectively (Božić & Tomić, 2015).

#### **3.4.1. The indicators of CREM**

The model, created for the objective evaluation of cultural corridors, draws attention not only to economic assessments but also to other important characteristics through various sub-indicators. These indicators consist of

two main groups: "Main Values of the Cultural Route" and "Tourism-Specific Values of the Cultural Route" (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** CREM indicators groups (Božić & Tomić, 2015)

Cultural value, historical value, artistic value, social value, educational value, research value, and aesthetic value represent the scientific values, which are one of the main values of the cultural route.

Tourism-specific values of the cultural route are one of the most distinctive aspects of the CREM model, referring to the specific characteristics of the route itself. These values are comprised of sub-indicators that highlight the uniqueness and rarity of the route in the region, its geographical character, the number of attractive points along the route, the appeal of the theme promoted by the route, and the existence of a cultural route management plan.

The model assesses the economic significance of routes through several sub-indicators. These indicators are as follows: contribution to the local community, impact on the economic development of the region or country, investment potential, contribution to brand formation, contribution to the formation of a positive country image, and possibility for cross-border cooperation. The last sub-indicator group within the main values of the cultural route is conservation values, which relate to the preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage. These sub-indicators include the current



state of points along the route, security vulnerabilities, the level of conservation, and the number of tourists.

The other main indicator, the tourism-specific values of the cultural route, consists of two sub-indicators: functional value and tourism values. Within the tourism-specific values, the first group, functional values, comprises sub-indicators such as the arrangement and accessibility of structures along the route, the location of the route, tourist signage, and the density of attractive places along the route.

Experts who consider the evaluation of the tourism potential of cultural routes to be of great importance have, similar to some heritage assessment models, added sub-indicators related to tourism product values to the model. When assessing heritage sites within the model, the significance of the experiential component has been emphasized, and it has been noted that the created opportunities are not only related to historical events but also create understanding or emotional responses to enhance the harmony and awareness of cultural heritage (Puczko, 2006) (Laing et al., 2014) (McKercher & Ho, 2006).

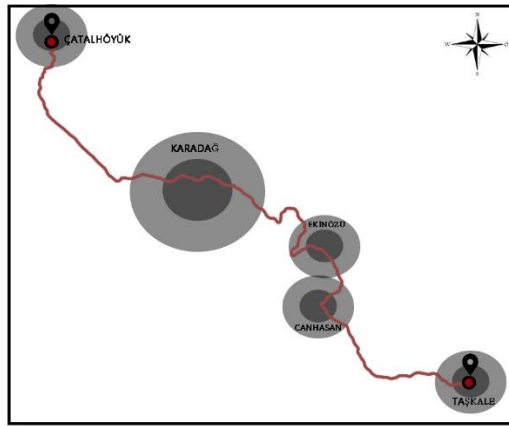
#### **4. Karaman Cultural Route Evaluation Model -Crem and Analysis**

Karaman, located in the Central Anatolia region of Turkey, is a city with a rich cultural heritage, having hosted numerous civilizations such as the Byzantine, Seljuk, Karamanoğlu, and Ottoman periods. Despite its potential, including favorable physical surroundings and significant historical background, the heritage sites in the city have not received sufficient attention and await integration into tourism with the power of cultural routes. The study aims to guide the planning process by analyzing

the proposed cultural route, highlighting its advantages and disadvantages, and contributing to the promotion of the city's cultural heritage through tourism.

#### **4.1. Proposed Cultural Route for Karaman: Mixed Periods Cultural Route**

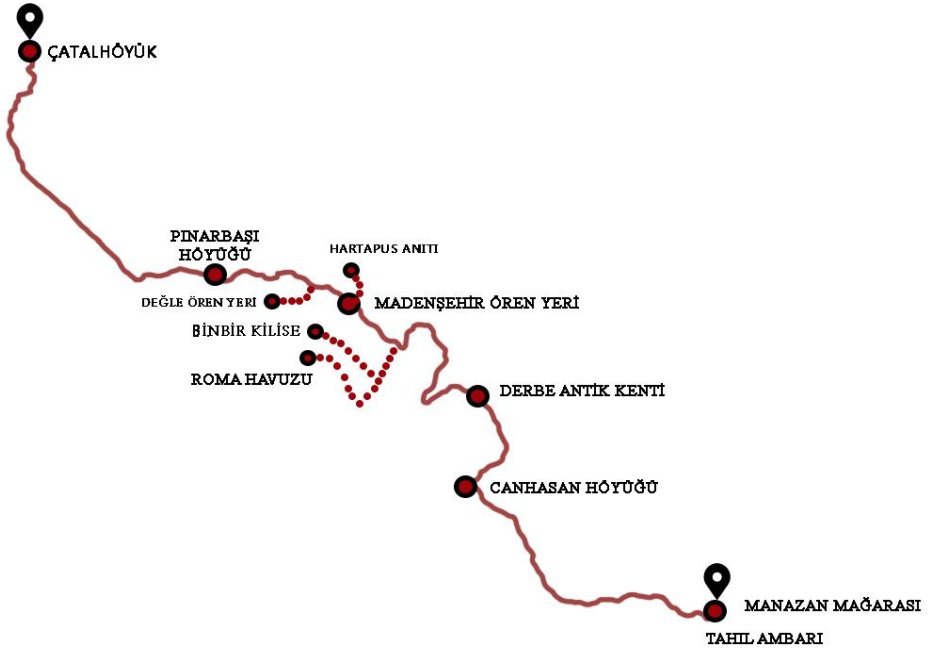
In the designed route for the city, areas that represent the identity of the region well and require preservation and development have been identified parallel to the historical development of the city, and these areas have been considered within the context of heritage potential. The route, which is designed along a north-south direction, includes specific focal points and the surrounding areas that contribute to these focal points.



**Figure 2.** Proposed cultural route landmarks

In route design, Çatalhöyük Ancient City has been determined as the starting point, with the belief that its settlement system will nourish and support the common identity. Following the ancient city, another focal point is Karadağ and its surroundings, which is an important settlement for Christianity. Karadağ holds a significant place in the design due to its inclusion of many

cultural assets. The route continues with the settlements of Ekinözü, Canhasan, and Taşkale Village, and the fact that these areas are at risk of disappearing further emphasizes the importance of this study.



**Figure 3.** Proposed route design

The developed route system for the city is believed to contribute to the promotion of regional values, the elevation of the local community's cultural awareness, support for development, and the establishment of a comprehensive conservation system. Additionally, it is envisaged that it will draw attention to existing issues and help involve relevant stakeholders effectively.

## 4.2. Structures on the Proposed Cultural Route

Çatalhöyük Ancient City: A settlement reflecting the rich history of Anatolia, with its first architectural organization, findings related to the first religious structures, and the representation of multiple layers of human history, making it a unique and influential site worldwide (Hodder, 2010). These characteristics have played a significant role in earning the area the title of "Cradle of Civilizations" (Tuncer & Bulut, 2019). This site, which is listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, is located in the Çumra district of Konya, Turkey.

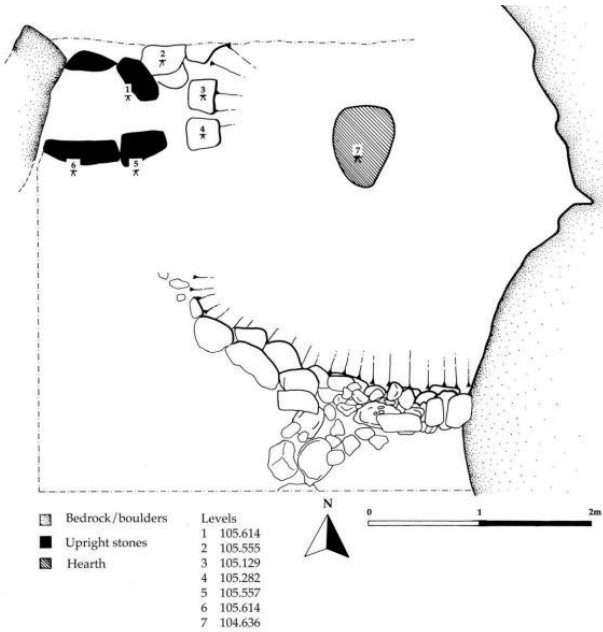


**Figure 4.** Current state of Çatalhöyük (Personel Archive, 2023)

It is believed that attracting visitors to the region as a result of the increased focus on Çatalhöyük will be crucial for regional development within the scope of the route. Additionally, considering the theme of the route, Çatalhöyük will make significant contributions to the network of routes.

Pınarbaşı Open-Air Settlement and Rock Shelter: This site, located in the village of Ortaoba, contains eroded remnants of a settlement dating back to the Neolithic, Bronze Age, and the Roman-Byzantine period (Asouti, 2001).

Studies conducted at the site have revealed that the people living here had a culture similar to Çatalhöyük (Topal, 2000). Additionally, there is a hypothesis that the inhabitants of Çatalhöyük used Pınarbaşı as a seasonal area, and ongoing DNA analysis studies are being conducted on this subject (Baird, D et al. 2011).



**Figure 5.** Pınarbaşı archaeological site plan (Baird et al., 2011).

The association of the site with Çatalhöyük is of great significance within the scope of the route design. It is believed that the inclusion of the site in the design is crucial for the success of the overall route.

Degle Archaeological Site: Located within the 1st-degree Archaeological Site Area, the site is situated on the Karadağ massif. The presence of Saint Paul, who is believed to have undertaken missionary work here, has sanctified and made the area noteworthy (Tapur, 2017). The site contains

significant cultural heritage values, such as numerous churches, chapels, tombs, and residential structures related to Christianity. Considering the current abandoned state of the area, studies related to this site are of great importance. Therefore, the inclusion of the archaeological site in the route design is expected to create a prestigious cultural environment.



**Figure 6.** Degle archaeological site (Ulvi, 2019)

*Kızıldağ and Hartapus Monument:* Located on the southern slope of the Kızıldağ mountain range, there is a large flat rock mass that contains the remnants of a Hittite castle, sacred areas, the relief of King Hartapus, and inscriptions (Kurt, 2009). Some experts have related the monument to the landscape with the King and the Deity, suggesting that religious rituals were performed in this area (French, 1996). Additionally, the site, which is associated with the Hittites, became a place of pilgrimage in Early Christianity, and temples were constructed here.





**Figure 7.** Kızıldağ I Inscription and Hartapus Relief (Kurt, 2013- Rojas & Sergueenkova, 2014)



**Figure 8.** Kızıldağ I Inscription (Hawkins, 2000)

The area, which is relatively less known compared to the other structures within Karadağ, has been included in the route design with the aim of creating spatial integrity with other structures and ensuring its development with the support of these structures.

Madenşehir Archaeological Site: This "Urban Conservation Area" is located in Madenşehir Village, in the middle of the volcanic mountain massif of Karadağ, 37 km away from the city center. Due to its significance as an important religious center, many researchers have explored this site in search of important but not fully known centers (French, 1996).



**Figure 9.** Basilica No. I (Personal archive, 2022)

Binbir Kilise Site, the largest among the Binbir Kilise structures, encompasses several architectural groups from the Early Christian Period, including military buildings, tombs, and residences. Extensive research conducted by G.L. Bell and W.M. Ramsay indicates that the site, referred to as the "Lower City," has maintained its existence from the Hellenistic Period to the Byzantine Period of the Middle Ages (French, 1996). The remains found here have been dated back to the Late Roman and Byzantine eras. Currently, the site is in a state of ruins and is gradually deteriorating, making it crucial to increase interest and attention to preserve its cultural heritage. In this context, incorporating the site into the cultural route network presents a valuable opportunity.

*Karadağ Binbir Kilise:* This area has consistently captured the attention of researchers as it encompasses numerous church structures spreading from the foothills to the summit of Karadağ. The site contains a multitude of churches, monasteries, religious, and military buildings, making it one of the most significant centers of the Late Antique Period. Its location is also regarded as a sacred site, and it is known to host remnants from the Hittite civilization (Hawkins, 1992).



**Figure 10.** Hill Ruins (Personal archive, 2023; Sucu, 2019)

In terms of both architectural and historical values, the area is one of the places that must be experienced in cultural tourism. Additionally, with its cultural assets, location, and natural beauty, it holds significant tourism potential. The site has been observed as a stopover in tours conducted on behalf of the city, and it is believed that it will also support less-developed areas in the route design.

*Başdağ Castle and Roman Pool:* Located on the elevation of Karadağ, the area contains a castle, military structures, and a Roman pool known to have been used during the Roman and Byzantine periods. The ancient archaeological site of the pools is believed to have been used as a sacred area related to water cult during the Hittite period as well (Turgut, 2015). Considering that the pools and remains are still in use today, the area has been considered as a must-visit place in terms of route coherence and has been included in the route plan.

*Derbe Ancient City:* Hosting the Bronze Age, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods, this city is referred to as the lost city. Inscriptions found in the vicinity strengthen the belief that the city was located here. Derbe, where Saint Paul settled and delivered sermons, is considered to have been

the bishopric and administrative center of the period. Additionally, there is a church, which is believed to have been built by Saint Paul 13 years before the Church of Virgin Mary, making it the first Christian church built on Earth (Şahiner, 2012).



**Figure 11.** Derbe City Ruins (Arkeonews, 2023)

Based on this data, it is evident that the area contains significant cultural heritage values. The lack of promotion and archaeological excavation works related to the area negatively affects its development. At this point, the efforts and initiatives regarding the area are crucial. Integrating the area into the cultural route network is believed to have positive impacts on its recognition and visibility in cultural tourism. With the opportunities provided by the cultural route network, the area will attain the recognition it deserves.

*Canhasan Mounds:* Located in the village of Canhasan, the area has provided evidence from the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods (French, 1998). The site consists of three significant mounds, named Canhasan I, Canhasan II, and Canhasan III, which have been dated to different periods. The excavation works conducted in the area have revealed settlement typologies indicating that the site is one of the important settlements reflecting the urbanization process. This characterization has contributed to

the classification of the mounds as a continuation of Çatalhöyük in Karaman (Kurt, 2009). Additionally, the excavations at Canhasan III have led to the assumption that the site might be older than Çatalhöyük and could be the place where the transition to agriculture began.

Canhasan Mounds; as a place that summarizes a lot of information about the history and culture of the city and the region, and considering its spatial similarities with Çatalhöyük, its inclusion in the route design will provide significant contributions to the area.

Grain Silos: Located in the village of Taşkale, the area was established on a plateau with erosion features on the slopes of the Taurus Mountains. The karst formations surrounding the village have provided opportunities to create unique spaces such as cave systems, grain silos, and shrines, adding distinctiveness to the area.



**Figure 12.** Grain Silos (Personal archive, 2023)

The findings at the site indicate that Taşkale has been a settlement for various civilizations, including the Phrygians, Romans, Christians, Byzantines, Seljuks, Karamanoğulları, and Ottomans, starting from the 2nd century. However, specific construction dates could not be determined. The grain silos, with multiple rooms, were used for long-term grain storage due

to the heat and humidity-regulating properties of limestone (Topal, 2009). Initially used by Christians, the function of these silos later changed with the arrival of the Turks, and today they are observed to be used not only for grain storage but also for storing various goods (Gültekin & Uysal, 2018). Despite having unique conditions, location, interaction area, form and design, and traditional function, the grain silos hold similarities with formations found in the Cappadocia region. However, it is observed that tourism activities have remained limited, and the desired momentum in tourism has not been achieved. Therefore, the cultural route system, considered an essential strategy, is expected to provide the necessary boost for the area by offering a curated and experiential journey for visitors.

*Manazan Caves:* Due to the karstic features of Taşkale Village, numerous cave systems have developed in the surrounding area. Among these caves, Manazan, an ancient settlement, was used as a living area during the Roman and Early Christian periods (Konyalı, 1967). Being an archaeological site, Manazan showcases how humans shaped the natural structure according to their needs, creating a unique living space. With these characteristics, Manazan holds the distinction of being one of the largest human-carved caves in the world.



**Figure 13.** Manazan Caves, facade (Personal archive,2023)



The cave, which still maintains its mystery, is one of the areas that should be considered for cultural tourism due to its unique conditions, distinctive form shaped by the environment, authentic structure, and representation of the culture of a specific period.

### **4.3. Evaluation**

The proposed cultural route's potential was assessed using the CREM model's sub-indicators, and the current status, along with all advantages and disadvantages, were clearly identified by presenting them to 10 experts through the Likert Scale (1-least, 5-most important). It should be noted that each sub-indicator group does not have equal value. The calculation method for the indicators is described in the scientific value table, and other indicators were calculated in a similar manner. The scientific value of the route consists of seven sub-indicator groups: [Note: The specific sub-indicator groups and their corresponding values need to be provided to complete the translation accurately:

- Cultural Value (the relationship between the route or itinerary and culture),
- Historical Value (the connection of the route with the past or its significance for the region's history),
- Artistic Value (the unique nature of the place, being an example, or deriving value from the work of a specific individual),
- Social Value (the ability of the place to provide social connections and serve as a gathering place, fostering a sense of attachment to the location),

- Educational Value (the potential to provide information about the past),
- Research Value (the contribution to science and research),
- Aesthetic Value (the visual quality).

The importance factor (Im) is calculated based on the expert ratings given to these indicators. It is calculated as follows (Božić & Tomić, 2015):

$$Im = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^K Iv_k}{K}$$
 where Iv<sub>k</sub> represent the assessment/score of one expert for each subindicator and K is the total number of experts, meaning that Im represents the average Importance for all respondents included in the survey (Božić & Tomić, 2015). Values according to the method were found as follows:

- Cultural Value Im Value:

$$Im = \frac{3+4+4+3+2+3+3+4+2+3}{10} = 3,1$$

- Historical Value Im Value:

$$Im = \frac{4+4+4+3+3+3+4+4+4+3}{10} = 3,6$$

- Artistic Value Im Value:

$$Im = \frac{4+4+3+2+2+3+3+2+4+4}{10} = 3,1$$

- Social Value Im Value:

$$\text{Im} = \frac{3+3+3+2+2+3+1+3+3+2}{10} = 2,5$$

- Education Value Im Value:

$$\text{Im} = \frac{4+4+3+3+3+2+3+3+4+4}{10} = 3,3$$

- Research Value Im Value:

$$\text{Im} = \frac{3+3+3+2+2+2+3+3+2+3}{10} = 2,6$$

- Aesthetic Value Im Value:

$$\text{Im} = \frac{4+4+4+3+2+3+4+4+4+4}{10} = 3,6$$

When the Importance factor (Im) is calculated, the next step is the determination of the maximum value or maximum number of points for each subindicator in the CREM model. The mentioned is done in the following manner:

- The subindicators with Im valued from 1 to 1.49 have the maximum number of points 1.
- The subindicators with Im valued from 1.5 to 2.49 have the maximum number of points 2.
- The subindicators with Im valued from 2.5 to 3.49 have the maximum number of points 3.

- The subindicators with  $I_m$  valued from 3.5 to 4.49 have the maximum number of points 4.
- The subindicators with  $I_m$  valued from 4.5 to 5 have the maximum number of points 5.

Accordingly, the maximum value results of the sub-indicators are as follows:

Cultural Value Maximum Value: **3**

Historical Value Maximum Value: **4**

Artistic Value Maximum Value: **3**

Social Value Maximum Value: **3**

Training Value Maximum Value: **3**

Research Value Max Value: **3**

Aesthetic Value Maximum Value: **4**

Finally, after making the necessary improvements, the indicators were scaled to determine the position of the route proposal. The results were recorded in Table 1.

**Table 1. Results of the route's scientific value**

Sub Indicators	Description of Values	Im	Maximum Value of Sub-Indicators	Writer Value Given by
Cultural Value (relationship of route or route to culture)	1-none 2-low 3-medium 4-high 5-utmost	3,1	3	( 4 )
Historical Value (relationship of the route to the past or importance to the history of the area)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	3,6	4	( 4 )
Artistic Value (value based on whether the place is unique, exemplary, or the work of a particular person)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	3,1	3	( 4 )
Social Value (the ability of the place to provide social connections and be a gathering place and develop a sense of attachment to the place)	1- low 2- medium 3- high	2,5	3	( 3 )
Educational Value (potential to provide background information)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	3,3	3	( 3 )
Research Value (contribution to science and research)	1- low 2- medium 3- high	2,6	3	( 3 )
Aesthetic Value (visual quality)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	3,6	4	( 4 )

The total maximum value of the sub-indicators is calculated as "23" for the scientific value of the route.

**Table 2. Results of the route's original value**

Sub Indicators	Description of Values	Im	Maximum Value of Sub-Indicators	Writer Value Given by
Uniqueness and Rarity of the Route in the Region (presence of similar routes nearby)	1-common 2-regional 3-national 4-international	1,9	2	( 2 )
Geographical Character of the Route (the size of the area where the route spans)	1-local/regional 2- national 3- international	1,5	1	( 1 )
Number of Attractive Points on the Route	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	2,5	3	( 3 )
Attractiveness of Theme Encouraged by the Route (theme's popularity and appeal)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	2,7	3	( 3 )
Existence of Cultural Route Management Plan (eg existence of master plan etc.)	1-there is no plan 2-the plan is in preparation 3-there is plan	1	1	( 1 )

The maximum value total of the sub-indicators for the route's original value is calculated as '10'.

**Table 3.** Economic value results of the route

Sub Indicators	Description of Values	Im	Maximum Value of Sub-Indicators	Writer Value Given by
Contribution to Local Community (creation of new workplaces, new local job opportunities)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	2	2	( 1 )
Impact on the Economic Development of the Region or the Country as a Whole (financial benefits from tourist visits, improvement of infrastructure and infrastructure)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	1,9	2	( 1 )
Investment Potential (potential to attract companies to invest in the cultural route)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	2,4	3	( 3 )
Contribution to Brand Formation (possibility of the cultural route to be a national or international brand)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high	2,3	2	( 1 )
Contribution to the Formation of a Positive Country Image (the effect on the positive image of the country with the development of cultural tourism)	1- none 2- low 3- medium 4- high 5- utmost	1,8	2	( 2 )
Cross-border Cooperation Possibilities (probability of the route being included in routes in other countries)	1- low 2- medium 3- high	1,3	1	( 1 )

The total maximum value of sub-indicators is calculated as "12" for the economic value of the route.



**Table 4.** Results of the route's conservation value

Sub Indicators	Description of Values	Im	Maximum Value of Sub-Indicators	Writer Value Given by
Current Status of Structures on the Route	1-much damaged (as a result of human activities) 2-moderately damaged (as a result of natural processes) 3-slightly damaged (preserving its basic features) 4- no damage	1,4	1	( 1 )
Vulnerability (vulnerabilities of points along the route)	1—high 2—medium 3—low or none	1,5	2	( 1 )
Level of Protection by Institutions (protected by local or regional groups, national government, international organizations)	1-local 2-regional 3-national 4-international	1,3	1	( 1 )
Number of Visitors Tourists per Building on the Route (recommended number of visitors for the building based on the current situation)	1-(0-10 people) 2-(11-20 people) 3-(21-50 people) 4- (more than 50 people)	2,5	3	( 1 )

The total maximum value of the sub-indicators is calculated as '7' for the conservation value of the route.

**Table 5.** Functional value results of the route

Sub Indicators	Description of Values	Im	Maximum Value of Sub-Indicators	Writer Value Given by
Layout and Accessibility of Structures on the Route (probability of approaching the point)	1—low (on foot with special equipment and expert guide tours) 2—medium (by bicycle and other means of man-powered transport) 3—high (by car, bus)	2,6	3	( 2 )
Location of the route (location of road networks)	1—not convenient 2—medium convenient 3—favorable	2,5	3	( 2 )
Touristic Signaling (information boards showing the location and distance of points)	1—none 2—low 3—medium 4—high	1,8	2	( 2 )
Density of Points of Interest on the Route (number of points of interest compared to the length of the route)	1—none 2—low 3—medium 4—high	2,8	3	( 1 )

The maximum total value of the sub-indicators for the functional value, which is one of the main indicators of the route and includes values specific to tourism, has been calculated as "11".

**Table 6. Route's tourism value results**

Sub Indicators	Description of Values	Im	Maximum Value of Sub-Indicators	Writer Value Given by
Accommodation Services (accommodations close to the route)	1-more than 25 km 2-10-25 km 3-5-10 km 4-less than 5km	1	1	( 1 )
Restaurant Services (restaurants close to the route)	1-more than 10 km 2-5-10 km 3-5-1 km 4-less than 1 km	1,2	1	( 1 )
Availability/Need of Tour Guide Service (if any, level of expertise, foreign language knowledge, interpretation skills)	1-none 2-low 3-medium 4-high 5-highest	1,7	2	( 1 )
Tourism Infrastructure (pedestrian roads, resting places, garbage cans, toilets, etc.)	1-none 2-low 3-medium 4-high 5-highest	1,8	2	( 2 )
Presentation/Output Possibilities (potential to create an interesting/original story about the route)	1-yok 2-düşük 3-orta 4-yüksek 5-en yüksek	2,9	3	( 3 )
Eligibility for Event/Organization (organization possibilities of various events)	0.50-none 1-low 1.50-medium 2-high	1,15	1	( 2 )
Organizational Opportunities for Providing Authentic Experience)	1-none 2-low 3-medium 4-high 5-highest	2,8	3	( 4 )
Opportunities to Provide Interesting Visits for Tourists	1-none 2-low 3-medium 4-high	3,5	4	( 4 )
Attractiveness of Places Along the Route (tourist attraction-number of points on the route)	1-none 2-low 3-medium 4-high 5-highest	3,6	4	( 3 )
Level of Tourist Visits (number of tourists per year)	1-low (less than 25 000) 2-medium (between 25 001-50 000) 3-high (between 50 001-100 000) 4-highest (more than 100 000)	1,1	1	( 1 )
Availability of Additional Interpreting Facilities (interpretive panels, visitor and information centres, museums, exhibitions)	1-none 2-low 3-medium 4-high 5-highest	1,2	1	( 1 )
Presence of Travel Arrangements for Cultural Activities (presence of itineraries related to the route in travel agencies)	1-none or low 2-medium 3-high	1,1	1	( 1 )
Availability of Authentic Souvenirs (souvenirs related to the route theme)	1-none 2-low quality 3-medium quality 4-high quality	1	1	( 1 )

The maximum value sum of the sub-indicators was calculated as "25" for the tourism value of the route.

The maximum score for each sub-indicator group in the Main Values and Tourism-Specific Values has been calculated by summing up the maximum value numbers for each sub-indicator group in both categories, and their importance levels have been determined. The overall evaluation score for

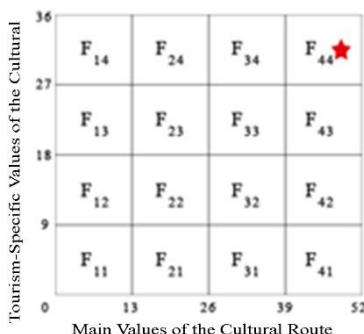
the analyzed route is shown in Table 7. This equation can be expressed as follows (Božić & Tomić, 2015):

**Table 7.** Route's overall value results

Main Values of the Cultural Route	25+10+9+4 = 48
Tourism-Specific Values of the Cultural Route	7+25=32

The results have been mapped onto the CREM matrix, where the x-axis represents the "Main Values" of the route, and the y-axis represents the "Tourism-Specific Values" of the route. The matrix system has been divided into sixteen areas denoted by  $F_{ij}$  ( $i, j = 1, 2, 3, 4$ ) based on the results of the evaluation process. According to the value results, the Main Value is 48, and the Tourism-Specific Value is 32, indicating that the current position of the route can be expressed as  $F_{44}$ .

**Table 8.** Result matrix of the cultural route



#### 4.3.1. Expert Evaluations

According to the evaluations, it has been concluded that the main values of the route are more significant. Among the main values, the scientific value category is seen to be more important compared to other groups. This situation can be attributed to the city's history of hosting significant civilizations and leaving behind their heritage sites.

Looking at the distribution of values specific to the route, it can be observed that the overall structure of the route is evaluated at the local/regional level. Additionally, the attractiveness of the theme encouraged by the itinerary is seen to be at a moderate level. This situation can be explained by the fact that some assumptions related to certain areas along the route have not been brought to light and therefore, they might not receive the necessary attention.

The current economic significance of the route is seen to be at a quite low level. This can be explained by the lack of implementation and development plans for the route, as well as the absence of relevant promotion and advertising efforts. Without proper promotion and marketing, the potential economic benefits of the route may not be fully realized, leading to its relatively low economic importance at present.

Considering the conservation values, it can be observed that all values are at a low level. This can be explained by the fact that heritage sites have been damaged as a result of human activities and natural processes. Some areas may have been abandoned or left to their fate, lacking proper conservation efforts from institutions. Illegal excavations and misuse of cultural assets are other factors that have led to significant deterioration of heritage sites. These issues have collectively contributed to the low conservation values of the route. Proper preservation and conservation measures are crucial to safeguard these cultural assets for future generations.

Indeed, when considering the functional values within the main values related to tourism, it can be said that the route is in a favorable position. This can be attributed to the proximity of the focal points to the main settlements

along the route. The central point of the route, Karadağ, may require special efforts for access. It is important to note that despite the favorable location of the focal points, ensuring easy and convenient access to the route's attractions is crucial for enhancing its overall appeal to tourists. Improved transportation options and well-designed visitor facilities can play a significant role in attracting more visitors and promoting the cultural route effectively.

The tourism values of the route include some sub-indicators that indicate insufficient efforts and investments to make the areas suitable for tourist visits. The concentration of accommodation and restaurant services in the central area negatively impacts the development of other areas along the route. While the attractiveness of the places along the route receives high scores, the low scores for tourism infrastructure summarize this situation.

Considering all these indicators, when the current state of the route positioned at F44 is examined, it becomes apparent that there are deficiencies in investments made in tourism values. Additionally, one of the main problems preventing the areas from opening up to the tourism sector is the lack of promotion. Without adequate promotion, these places cannot be embraced by the society, and as a result, the route may not achieve success.

Therefore, the success of the route's structure relies on sustainable conservation approaches and promotional efforts to foster the development of rural areas. It is crucial to address these promotion gaps to generate interest in the less-known locations and ensure the route's success.

#### **4. Conclusion and Suggestions**

Cultural heritage sites that establish a connection between the past and the future, reflecting common values and the identity of their location, are the shared heritage of all humanity, and preserving these treasures is the responsibility of everyone, from individuals to the broader community. In this regard, approaches to the conservation of cultural heritage are now shifting towards new perspectives. These new approaches are focused on finding a balance between tourism and heritage areas, and they lead countries to consider experiencing culture through the route structure.

Routeways emerge as an effective tool for the preservation of cultural heritage, and they go beyond conservation, playing a significant role in promotion, economy, and creating a positive image. The power of routes in forming networks and spreading across vast areas can be seen as an opportunity for the development of rural areas, especially in the case of Karaman city.

Considering the results of the evaluation conducted with the CREM model, it is essential to take into account the importance of the areas proposed in the recommended route structure and to provide a perspective on how to develop the missing aspects for the planning process. The evaluation results indicate that the lack of promotion and the failure of the local community to embrace their values are the most significant shortcomings that hinder the development of interest in the area, and this situation also affects the investment process. Additionally, the lack of conservation and excavation efforts related to cultural assets in the proposed structure prevents the areas from being assessed for tourism.

To implement and ensure the sustainability of the route system established in Karaman, certain strategies are needed. The fundamental approach for the success of the structure is to bring together the residents and workers of the city and act with a sense of responsibility towards the common heritage. The main objective of this collaboration should be the preservation of heritage, promotion of regional values, and support for local development.

The key step in the implementation process of the route is the creation of promotional strategies and materials, which should be regularly updated to reflect the image of Karaman to the target audience. These efforts play a crucial role in generating interest in the route.

Moreover, supporting assumptions about areas with significant values through necessary research and studies is essential in creating interest in the route. This approach enhances the credibility and appeal of the cultural assets and historical sites.

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The article complies with national and international research and publication ethics.

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### **Author Contribution and Conflict of Interest Declaration Information**

All authors contributed equally to the article. There is no conflict of interest.



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