

Innovation and Creativity in the Sustainable Development of Cultural Tourism Destinations

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Candidate's background

Anamaria Răvar has a bachelor degree in Business Administration from the Faculty of Commerce – Bucharest University of Economic Studies, as well as one in Tourism Geography, awarded by the Faculty of Geography – University of Bucharest. In 2010, Anamaria obtained a master's degree in Business Administration in Tourism, graduating top of her class, with a general average of 10.00 out of 10.00. Her specialties include sustainable tourism, cultural and creative tourism, social entrepreneurship in tourism. Anamaria is an active member of the Young Skal Bucharest club, a youth organization for tourism professionals and was actively involved in organizing the "Tourism in Romania 2030" colloquium in July 2013. She is also working as a junior business consulting for Structural Consulting™ Group, a company specialised in the writing and implementation of EU-funded projects.

Brief presentation of the research project

The aim of the paper is to determine and measure the correlation between innovation, market competitiveness and the sustainable development of cultural tourism destinations. In this sense, the author proposed several specific objectives:

- The development and validation of a theoretical model for the analysis of the creativity-innovation-competitiveness-sustainability relationship at the level of cultural tourism destinations;
- The development and validation of a set of innovation indicators in cultural tourism;
- Analysing the relation between innovation intensity in tourism and the prevalence of tourism clusters;
- Analysing the contribution of clusters and innovation networks to enhancing competitiveness and sustainable development at the level of cultural tourism destinations;
- Determining creative and innovative practices in the sustainable development of cultural tourist destinations;
- Proposing a typology of innovation in cultural tourism.

At the end of the programme, I will have researched both the positive impact of innovation and creativity on the sustainable development of tourist destination, as well as innovation's contribution to culture commodification through changes in traditional living styles and forms of expression. The approach is new to the current level of research since it focuses not on a one-way relation between two variables, but on the complex network of relations between each of the elements of the triangle innovation – competitiveness – sustainability. Another novelty brought by the paper is the development and validation of a set of «innovation indicators» adapted to cultural tourism destinations. Based on these indicators, I will propose a comprehensive definition of what represents an innovative cultural tourism product. Up to the time being, I have analysed the content and particularities of the tourism market and cultural tourism (literature review), as well as of innovation and creativity in the various sectors of the tourism industry (quantitative questionnaire-based research). Currently, I am working on a qualitative research regarding the impact of innovation on the sustainable development of cultural tourism in multi-ethnic communities.

Keywords: *creativity, innovation, sustainable development, tourist destination, cultural tourism*

Research methods

Research methods include literature review, questionnaire-based quantitative research and qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews and case studies. Analysis of quantitative data is limited since statistics on innovation or sustainability are scarce and rarely reliable. Research is structured as it follows:

Semester I and II: Literature review and qualitative research on the content and particularities of cultural tourism (semester I) and cultural tourist destinations in Romania (semester II). This phase has already been completed and consisted in bibliographical research and documentation. Several types of information sources were used: academic publications, including articles in scientific journals, transcripts of interviews with experts and presentations held at conferences in the field of cultural tourism, publications of professional networks.

Semester III: Literature review and qualitative research (case study and interviews) on innovation and creativity in cultural tourism. This phase involves, apart from bibliographical research, participating in workshops, themed conferences (e.g. weekly conferences organised by the Ecotourism Centre in Bucharest), interviews with project managers and local leaders implementing innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism. 6 interviews with representatives of relevant NGOs and 9 interviews with representatives of travel agencies and tour operators have been conducted so far. A case study on innovation and creativity in cultural tourism in the Viscri area is currently work in progress.

Semester IV and V: quantitative and qualitative research on the contribution of creativity and innovation on the sustainable development and competitiveness of cultural tourism destinations. A questionnaire-based study will be conducted on operators in the tourism industry, which will be complemented by an analysis of statistical data relevant to the competitiveness of the tourism sectors. A case study on best practices on innovation in cultural tourism will also be presented.

Research outputs and their implementation

The findings generated so far have been materialised in the publication of 6 articles indexed in international data bases:

- Răvar, A., 2012, „Cultural identity and tourist destination development. A case study of the Land of Bârsea” / „Identitatea culturală și dezvoltarea destinațiilor turistice. Studiu de caz – țara Bârsei”, *Forum geografic. Geographical studies and environment protection research*, vol. XI, Special issue, pp. 44-51
- Jaliu, D., Răvar, A., 2012, „Considerations on the Financing of Tourism Development and Promotion Strategies in Romania” / „Considerații asupra finanțării strategiilor de dezvoltare și promovare a turismului în România”, *Ovidius University Annals*, vol. XII, Issue 2, pp. 87-92
- Țigu, G., Iorgulescu, C., Răvar, A., 2013, „The Impact of Creativity and Innovation in the Hospitality Industry on Customers” / „Impactul creativității și inovării în industria ospitalității asupra consumatorilor de turism”, *Journal of Tourism Challenges and Trends*, vol. VI-1, p. 9-34
- Iorgulescu, C., Răvar, A., „Consumers’ perception on innovation in the tourism value chain” / „Percepția consumatorilor asupra inovării în lanțul valoric din turism”, *Oradea University Annals – Economic Sciences*, Issue 1/2013, pp. 815-824
- Răvar, A., Mahika, C., „What motivates cultural tourists? An analysis of Bucharest inhabitants’ motivation to visit the Centre Region” / „Ce îi motivează pe turiștii culturali? O analiză a motivației locuitorilor din București de a vizita Regiunea Centru”, *Oradea University Annals – Economic Sciences*, Issue 1/2013, pp. 825-829

Furthermore, 7 papers have been presented so far at international conferences that have taken place in Romania or abroad:

- Țigu, G., Răvar, C., 2012, „The sustainable development of tourist destinations through social entrepreneurship” / „Dezvoltarea durabilă a destinațiilor turistice prin antreprenariat social” – RESER International Conference, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, September 2012

- Iorgulescu, C., Răvar, A., 2012, „Contribution of Social Enterprises to the Development of Tourism. The Case of Romania”/„Contribuția întreprinderilor sociale la dezvoltarea turismului. Studiu de caz: România” – International Conference on Social Responsibility, Ethics and Sustainable Business (ICSR), Bucharest University of Economic Studies, October 2012
- Iorgulescu, C., Răvar, A., „Measuring Managers’ Perception of Innovation in the Romanian Hospitality Industry”/„Măsurarea percepției managerilor asupra inovării în industria ospitalității din România”, IECS International Economic Conference, Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, May 2013
- Iorgulescu, C., Răvar, A., „Consumers’ perception on innovation in the tourism value chain”/„Percepția consumatorilor asupra inovării în lanțul valoric din turism”, Conferința internațională „European Integration – New Challenges”, 9th edition – EINCO 2013, Oradea University, May 2013
- Răvar, A., Mahika, C., „What motivates cultural tourists? An analysis of Bucharest inhabitants’ motivation to visit the Centre Region”/„Ce îi motivează pe turiștii culturali? O analiză a motivației locuitorilor din București de a vizita Regiunea Centru”, Conferința internațională „European Integration – New Challenges”, 9th edition – EINCO 2013, Oradea University, May 2013
- Jaliu, D., Răvar, A., „Mechanisms for Financing Social Economy Organisations – Constraints and Opportunities. A Case Study of Romania”/„Mecanisme pentru finanțarea organizațiilor de economie socială. Studiu de caz: România”, 4th CIRIEC International Research Conference on Social Economy, University of Antwerp, October 2013
- Stăncioiu, A. F., Teodorescu, N., Răvar, A., Botoș, A., „Creativity – source of competitive advantage in the value chain of tourism enterprises”/„Creativitatea – sursă de avantaj competitiv în lanțul valoric al întreprinderilor de turism” – The 4th International Conference on Tourism – 2013 CACTUS, November 2013

By the end of 2013, the article entitled “Tourists’ satisfaction with innovation in Romanian hotels” (that is already completed and reviewed) will be presented at the 7th International Conference on Management at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ISI Proceedings).

Other elements regarding the progress of the research

Anamaria Răvar has brought an active contribution to various scientific and tourism-industry related events, among which we can mention:

- Participating as a speaker at the «Partnership and entrepreneurial initiatives for sustainable development through the exploitation of the cultural heritage» organized by the Mihai Eminescu Trust on March 7th, 2013, with a presentation on “The Saxon cultural heritage – a resource for sustainable tourism”;
- Promotion coordinator (member of the organizing team) for the «Tourism in 2030» colloquium, organized by Young Skal Bucharest and the League of Romanian Students Abroad on July 10th, 2013

Furthermore, she offered her support to CACTUS and the Department of Tourism and Services in the organization of the Economic Summer University in Brașov (2013), by contacting local partners and speakers.

References

Since literature on creativity and innovation is relatively scarce and recent, bibliographical research focuses predominantly on the works of:

1. Busuioc, M. F., 2009, *Strategii de dezvoltare și promovare a turismului cultural în România*, București, Editura Universitară
2. Butcher J., 2001, *Innovations in cultural tourism*, Arnhem, Atlas
3. Hjalager, A. M., 1997, “Innovation patterns in sustainable tourism: An analytical typology”, *Tourism Management*, 18, pp. 35-41

4. Hjalager, A. M., 2002, "Repairing innovation defectiveness in tourism", *Tourism Management*, 23, pp. 465-474
5. Hjalager, A. M., 2010, "A review of innovation research in tourism", *Tourism Management*, 31, pp. 1-12
6. Richards G., Wilson J., 2008, *From cultural tourism to creative tourism – Part 1, 2, 3, 4*, Arnhem, Atlas