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# Gastronomic tourism and the creative economy

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**Abstract:** *The objective of this study was to better understand the relationship between gastronomic tourism and the creative economy. In the last years, there has been a solidification of gastronomy as the main motive to carrying out a trip. Tourists are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century «hungry» of new and different experiences. Tourist experiences and its outcome in which regards to the fulfilment or not of expectations is extremely important. The creative economy plays today a crucial role since gastronomic tourists are looking after the origin of the gastronomic food, legends and stories about food.*

**Keywords:** Cultural tourism, gastronomic tourism, creative economy, gastronomy, creative experiences

**JEL Classification:** L83, M1, O1

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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Gastronomy is an experience of participation in another culture and, of relationship with people and places with a strong sense of their own identity.

As the OECD (2014) tells us, the relationship between culture and tourism has been one of the major sources of tourism growth in recent decades. More recently, we are witnessing the increasing importance of creativity, which is supplementing conventional models of heritage-based cultural tourism with new forms of tourism based on intangible culture and contemporary creativity.

There is still not an agreement in the building of a comprehensive definition of constructs such as, creativity, creative experiences and creative gastronomy. However, all these constructs are beginning to appear in tourism literature, making extremely important new discussions and contributions on the subject, even because, without understanding these constructs it will be difficult to understand the perceived image generated by the participation of tourists in creative experiences.

Important in this paper is the thinking of Wang (1999) that emphasizes the growing importance of «existential authenticity». The idea of «being» on holiday places that give more emphasis on the creativity of the tourist, rather than seeing them as passive consumers or gazers upon a series of staged experiences.

UNCTAD (2015) has introduced the topic of the «creative economy» in the world economic and development agenda. The creative economy is an emerging concept dealing with the interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology.

The cultural tourism has become an «umbrella concept», covering a wide range of related activities, including gastronomy tourism, there has been also an increasing focus on gastronomy tourism and in how is possible to better promote distinctive local products and experiences including through creative gastronomy experiences.

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## 2 BACKGROUND LITERATURE

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### 2.1 Cultural tourism and gastronomy

Moving forward with a definition of cultural tourism is extremely difficult, as indeed many researchers acknowledge. Basing ourselves in Silberberk (1995) one can say that, cultural tourist is viewed as comprising all visits motivated in its whole or partly by interest in the historical, artistic and scientific supply (*stricto sensu*), but also, with interest in the way of life of a community, the particularities of a region, group or institution (*lato sensu*).

Therefore, one can say that the role of culture is multifaceted, once culture is simultaneously a resource, an attraction, a product, an experience and an outcome.

This difficulty is understandable due to the proliferation of the definitions of culture, of tourism and of those derived from the articulation of both definitions. Cultures are distinctively different in several cultures; this is one of the reasons of cultural tourism. People are attracted to differences rather than to similarities.

Cultural tourism constitutes itself as one of the oldest motives to travel and nowadays, this kind of tourism is still a pillar of the tourist activity in many parts of the world (Richards and

Munsters, 2010). On the other hand, the cultural tourism is also available as a development option for all destinations because all places have its culture (Richards, 2007).

The cultural tourism has become an «umbrella concept», covering a wide range of related activities, including gastronomy tourism.

The gastronomic tourism is, according to Mitchell and Hall (2003) associated to a trip away from the usual place of residence, motivated in its whole or partly for the interest in food and beverage, and/or in eating or drinking. According to Hall and Sharples (2003) food tourism is an experiential trip to a gastronomic region, for recreational or entertainment purposes, which includes visits to primary and secondary producers of food, gastronomic festivals, food fairs, events, farmers' markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, tastings of quality food products or any tourism activity related to food.

Consequently, it relates with the organization and promotion of festivals and events of food and wines, contemplating visits to primary and secondary producers, participation in gastronomic festivals, and the demand of restaurants or specific places where food tasting and all the inherent experimentation is the main reason for those who travel.

Recognizing gastronomy as a cultural element and the importance of the gastronomic experience, the Canadian Tourism Commission (2002) tell us that, gastronomy and cuisine are elements to add to the cultural touristic experience.

Many tourists consider partaking local food as a way to accrue knowledge on local food, as well as on local foodways and culture (Chang, et al., 2010; Kim, et al., 2009). Gastronomy is then an experience of participation.

## 2.2 Tourist experiences and satisfaction

According to Martins (2015) Tourism may be regarded as a fantasy selling industry striving upon people's dreams, hopes, beliefs, expectations and imaginaries, which are in turn transformed into consumable commodities, or experiences.

Many considerations exist in what regards to the definition and the dimensions that constitute the tourism experiences. Tung and Ritchie (2011) say that there is not still an agreement in the building of a comprehensive definition.

Chon (1989) found that the tourist satisfaction was based on the goodness of the fit between their expectation about the destination and the perceived evaluative outcome of the experience at the destination area, which is simply the result of a comparison between their previous destination images and what they actually see, feel and achieve there. Martins & Silva (2016) said that «the tourism experiences and its evaluation, is today considered a key factor in what regards to a tourist destination success. The experiences have as outcome a positive or negative influence in the construct satisfaction. However, the construct satisfaction is always very difficult to evaluate in quantitative terms even that it can be considered the best indicator of the tourism's health state, being linked to «loyalty» and likewise to the competitive advantage». The same authors also say that «the research on experiences and destination image is today more important than ever» once, as Gyriş et al. (2015) have pointed out,

research fails to simultaneously study and examine the relationship between emotional responses, destination image, satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

For their turn, Barsky & Labagh (1992) applied the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm (EDP) to tourist satisfaction. Basically, the proposed model applied to tourism satisfaction says that satisfaction is the result of the discrepancy between pre-travel expectations and post-travel perceptions. The result of their study pointed out that customer's satisfaction was correlated with the willingness to return.

As Beerli and Martin (2004) pointed out, not only the experience but also the intensity of the experience must be taken in account; so, one can say that it matters not only what tourist have lived and felt but how they lived and felt it. Without understanding this, it will be difficult to understand the perceived image generated by the experience.

Brakus et al. (2009), conceptualized tourism experiences as being composed of affective, sensorial, intellectual and behavioural dimensions, once, in addition to feelings and impressions, physical actions are also undertaken by tourists. But one must never forget that in the end, tourist experiences and satisfaction have also some or even a great degree of dependence of the imagery previous built on the tourists' mind.

Serena Volo as two interesting definitions of tourism experiences, the first one related to the experience offering and it tell us that: it is the experience essence that happens in the mind of tourists and does not relate to any particular product or service, rarely happens on command and it is very subjective... (Volo, 2009; Küçükaltan and Pirnar, 2016); the second one related to the experience essence and it tells us that: it is an occurrence experienced by a person outside the 'usual environment' and the «contracted time» boundaries that is comprised of a «sequence» of the following events: sensation, perception, interpretation and learning (Volo, 2010).

Concluding and according to Pine and Gilmore (1999), experiences can «touch» people better than products or services. Experiences are intangible and immaterial and although they tend to be expensive, people attach great value to them because they are memorable. Creating and supplying experiences will be a way for producers to survive in the ever more competitive future.

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## 3 CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND DISCUSSION

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### 3.1 The creative experience and tourism

The Oxford Living Dictionaries (2017), define creativity as «the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness. Florida (2002) says that creativity is seen as something «mystical» and multidimensional and therefore difficult to pin down. These ideas suggest that creativity is above all about developing new ways of thinking and doing, which explains the close link often made between creativity and innovation.

Richards (1999) tell us that, the desire for more leisure and tourism consumption reflects the shift in the focus of consumption away from physical goods toward services and experiences, which means that quality of life is increasingly judged in terms of access to those experiences'. In this sense, creativity could be applied to tourism through the development of new products or experiences; of new forms of consumption or new tourism spaces (Richards and Wilson, 2007).

These authors also tell us that a large number of ways exist in which creativity is interpreted and applied, both within the wider cultural development field and in tourism in particular. They identified the following ones:

- Creativity as a product;
- Creativity as an experience;
- Creativity as innovation;
- Creativity as a marketing strategy;
- Creativity as an industry sector;
- Creativity as a social development strategy;
- Creativity as a landscape;
- Creativity as problem-solving;
- Creativity as a blanket term for heritage and cultural tourism;
- Creativity as a challenge to identity;
- Creativity as difference and diversity.

Richards and Wilson (2007) also say that it is clear that there remains much discussion about the nature, scope and application of creativity, and that this debate will continue for some time to come.

Many «cultural tourists» these days seem to want to become part of the local community and have direct contact with the everyday lives of others (Richards 2007).

Wang (1999) emphasizes the growing importance of «existential authenticity». The idea of «being» on holiday places that give more emphasis on the creativity of the tourist, rather than seeing them as passive consumers or gazers upon a series of staged experiences.

Basing ourselves in the ideas of Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), one can speak in tourism of an «experience environment» referring to a space where dialogue can take place between industries and tourists. When the experience environment is sufficiently compelling, tourist communities can take on a life on their own and thereby becoming directly involved in the co-creation of an individual experience. An experience co-creation network contains all the people and things that are needed to provide the experience environment. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) also argue that co-creation should not be seen as outsourcing or as a minimum adaptation of goods or products as if they were tailor-made. Furthermore, for «real» co-creation to occur there needs to be a focus on experiences and on the experience economy (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2003).

According to OECD (2014), as a new approach to tourism development and marketing, creative tourism expands the very concept of tourism as a whole, driving a shift from conventional models of heritage-based cultural tourism to new models of creative tourism centred on contemporary creativity, innovation and intangible content.

### **3.2 Gastronomic tourism and the creative economy**

In the last years, as the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Project (Richards, 2007) advances, there has been a growing valorisation of the destination's intangible elements, such as, «environment», «gastronomy», «linguistic diversity», among others. These elements are considered important in the valorisation of the destination's attractivity, unicity and specificity.

Gastronomic tourism has grown considerably and has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism. Each time more people travel motivated by the gastronomy of a region and so, food is no more a mere complement in the trip but a primordial element in the selection process of a tourist destination (López-Guzmán *et al.*, 2012).

There has been an increasing focus on cultural tourism and the promotion of distinctive local products and experiences, including food and events. Creative products can in general be consumed anywhere via digital media. This offers opportunities to raise awareness of national and regional cultures and stimulate visitation. However, it creates challenges in linking creative products and experiences to specific places (OECD, 2014).

As for the gastronomic tourism experience, it can be defined as the evaluation carried out by the tourist on a number of attributes (attractiveness of the food and environment, quality of service), after a stay in a tourist destination where the tourist engaged in an activity related to gastronomy. The tourist's perceived value of a particular destination or establishment is therefore multidimensional (WTO, 2012).

Both destinations and tourism companies are aware of the importance of gastronomy in order to diversify tourism and stimulate local, regional and national economic development. Furthermore, gastronomic Tourism includes in its discourse ethical and sustainable values based on the territory, the landscape, the sea, local culture, local products, authenticity, which is something it has in common with current trends of cultural consumption (WTO, 2012).

UNESCO (2009), defines the creative industries as «those in which the product or service contains a substantial element of artistic or creative endeavour», encompassing «a broader range of activities which include cultural industries plus all cultural or artistic production, whether live or produced as an individual unit». The shift from «cultural industries» to the broader «creative industries» signifies a number of important changes in the way culture and creativity are viewed. However, one must have in mind that creative production only occurs if the outcome is at some level novel or original. According to UNCTAD (2015), creative economy sectors include arts and craft, books, films, paintings, festivals, songs, designs, digital animation and video games, to these ones UNESCO (2017) adds also gastronomy.

UNCTAD (2015) has introduced the topic of the «creative economy» in the world economic and development agenda. The creative economy is an emerging concept dealing with the interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology in a contemporary world dominated by images, sounds, texts and symbols. The creative economy is important to destinations because the destinations today supply very similar tourist products; there's a tendency to homogenization instead of heterogeneization. The creative economy brings that heterogeneization, which will lead

necessarily to a greater differentiation of the destinations image. The creative economy is also important, since a destination that has tourist products compatible with its image and to the consumer's expectations will have a double advantage having in account its competition

The number of cities included in the UNESCO's creative cities network due to gastronomy will take in the next years undoubtedly a big leap, today one can see in this network (created in 2004) cities as Belém and Florianópolis (Brazil), Parma (Italy), Bergen (Norway), Denia and Burgos (Spain), among others (UNESCO, 2017).

The growing importance of the creative economy can be seen analysing the following numbers; international trade in creative industries showed sustained growth in the last decade. The global market for traded creative goods and services totalled a record \$547billion in 2012, as compared to \$302 billion in 2003. Growth rates stood at 8.6 per cent annually from 2003 to 2012, showing the strength and resilience of the sector despite the economic deceleration of the world economy. Exports from developing countries, in particular in Asia, are growing faster than in the developed world.

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#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

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Creating and supplying experiences will be a way for producers to survive in an even more competitive future (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

*In lato sensu* everything that implies the discovery of one people's identity through some kind of challenge or learning can be considered creative.

One can conclude that quality gastronomy is a decisive factor in satisfaction, as it produces a lasting memory about the experience lived by the tourist (WTO, 2012). Gastronomy *per se* is a journey of experiences and can also be a journey of creative experiences.

Destinations are increasingly in search of alternatives to escape from the nowadays serial reproduction of culture. However, Tourists are still not included often as partners in the process of designing the experience. As the WTO (2012) stated, the gastronomic tourism experience can be defined as the evaluation carried out by the tourist on a number of attributes (attractiveness of the food and environment, quality of service), after a stay in a tourist destination where the tourist engaged in an activity related to gastronomy. The tourist's perceived value of a particular destination or establishment is therefore multidimensional.

Analysing this paper one can conclude that tomorrow tourists will look for new and creative experiences, luxury, culture and authenticity. However, one of the challenges that arise for destinations that bet in gastronomic tourism will be how to supply a heterogeneous product when gastronomic tourism is slowly becoming homogeneous, and here the supply of creative experiences that explore the «real authenticity» can play a key role.

As one can see in this paper, the development of creative industries in general and of creative gastronomy in particular brings challenges and implications both to destination's planning organizations and to destination's marketing organizations. It will be strategically necessary to find

synergies between the creative resources that destinations have and the needs of tourists and of gastronomic tourists in special.

This paper is clearly exploratory and with it, one intended to broaden the discussion scope on the thematic here developed.

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