

## The Creative Tourism – An Interactive Type of Cultural Tourism

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### Abstract

*The creative tourism, as concept and practices, is little known or even total unknown in the Romanian hospitality industry, thus an important potential for exploitation still awaits. The difficulties created by the current pandemic urge to limit traveling and so massive economic losses are faced especially by the tourism sector. The creative tourism offer comes with a new range of services, generators of increased added value due to the necessity of employing qualified human resources and their creative work; their talents, knowledge and skills shape the interaction with the travelers and also their experiences, overall the quality of the provided products and services as creative tourism's practices. This paper aims to spread knowledge on this subject by presenting a brief literature review and highlighting the main aspects implied by exploring the cultural heritage in a more involved and interactive way as the creative tourism does.*

**Key words:** creative tourism, creative economy, creative industries

**J.E.L. classification:** R12; Z10; Z31; Z32.

### 1. Introduction

As travelers' demands are continuously changing and their expectations are increasing, the tourism offer has to reinvent itself and so a new type of tourism has caught our attention: the creative tourism. In the last decades the concept of creative tourism has emerged as a type of tourism defined by the cultural and creative content and purpose of the holiday, and as a new concept, the creative tourism's practices are little known both in academia and in the hospitality industry, even if the concept is researched since 2005 (Palenčíková & Csapó, 2021, p. 43). The peculiarities of this type of tourism rely in the travelers' active involvement in leisure activities, besides active engagement these practices aim experimenting and learning customs, traditions or other cultural elements of the tourist destination. Obviously, there are various other practices similar to those just mentioned, some of them being recognized as creative tourism practices, and others, more often, as experimental, adventure or cultural tourism activities.

The multitude of innovations has made various domains unsecure to perishability, the tourism industry being amongst these. As more and more tourists develop more complex needs, so the touristic offers have to keep the pace in order to provide satisfying products and services and thus the creative tourism appears as one of the adapted responses to the continuously evolving requests. The rising interest in practicing creative tourism also determined by the numerous possibilities in counteracting the Covid-19 pandemic's effects on tourism, culture and creative industries, as well.

Furthermore, as the creative tourism is directly bonded to the creative economy, it presents significant advantages both at economic and social levels, these advantages being known as: development of new tourism products, experiences and destinations; increased competitiveness and improved image of the destination; new clients to target; sustainable tourism and development of the local community (Palenčíková & Csapó, 2021, p. 13).

## 2. Literature review

Tourism presents itself as the most pleasurable way to discover and to learn history, to get familiar to different cultures and so, to cultivate tolerance. The culture of a destination represents a resourceful valuable asset always ready to delight and to amaze those travelers curious about it, as Pechlaner & Abfalter pointed out “societal tendencies such as a higher significance of culture and experience and the quest for identity have shown increased interest in cultural tourism (...) and culture becoming an ever more important travel motive” (2005, p. 41).

There are several definitions for the cultural tourism referring to the journey’s aims; one of them belongs to Ratz who spots the willingness to get familiar to new cultures by attending cultural events and visiting cultural attractions of the destination (2011). Stebbins also perceives cultural tourism as a type of tourism practiced in order to gain aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological experiences in a cultural context (Stebbins in Palenčíková & Csapó, 2021, p. 19).

From another point of view, the cultural tourism was perceived as extended by the creative tourism (Richards in Richards & Wilson, 2006, p. 1424), a niche within the first one (Al-Ababneh & Masadeh in Pintea & Bădulescu, 2020, p.88), a provider of meaningful experiences aiming to ensure the understanding of the destination’s culture and no serial reproduction of it. The most popular definition of the new concept belongs to Richards and Raymond, who present the creative tourism as the type of “tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken” (2000, p. 18). Csapó put the spotlight on the creative tourism as a modern and more sustainable type of cultural tourism (2012, p. 229), a more creatively evolved cultural tourism (Richards, 2011, p. 1238) exploiting the heritage of the cultural destinations in order to protect and to create benefits to the local economy, along with ensuring authentic holidays for the tourists (UNWTO in Marques et al., 2020, p. 46). Also, the creative tourism is appreciated by UNESCO as “travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture” (2006, p. 3).

The reason behind practicing creative tourism implies the interest and curiosity to learn, to discover, to experiment and to enjoy both tangible and intangible heritage of the visited destination, a far more interactive cultural tourism, so we could consider the creative tourism as the active type of cultural tourism. As the tourist attractions vary and can be transposed into material, intellectual, spiritual or artistic forms, framing in this way the destination’s architecture, history, art, culture, lifestyle, societal values and traditions in the same manner as World Tourism Organisation sees the cultural tourism enhanced with the „lifestyles, creativity and day by day culture” (UNWTO in Richards, 2020a, p. 7). The motivation to travel advantages is extremely important in differentiating the cultural tourism from other types of tourism; cultural tourism is based on numerous reasons; exploring the cultural heritage in order to enable the access to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the local culture is one of them, meanwhile benefits to both sectors are created –tourism and the heritage. The cultural heritage attracts tourists, and on the other hand, tourism ensures the preservation of the heritage so the travelers’ interest could capitalise it.

The typical creative tourism’s activities are conducted all over the world, but the niche character of this segment causes a poor promotion and low visibility of the sector itself. The creative tourism requires to be recognised and promoted by the authorities and the hospitality industry, paying back with sustainable development options for the less popular tourism destination, rural areas or season-dependent destinations.

## 3. Research methodology

This paper represents rather a theoretical approach of the creative tourism. In this respect, the first sections are designed to introduce the new concept, its characteristics, advantages, the locations and the ways its commodity is promoted and sold. As the creative tourism trades cultural practices performed interactively aiming to enlarge the travelers’ experiences and knowledge, it relies on the

destination’s cultural heritage. Considering that the creative tourism focuses on activities, we considered essential to present a variety of intangible heritage elements enjoying worldwide recognition. So we took in consideration Romania, other several countries with geographical, historical or cultural similarities with Romania (Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine, Slovakia), and also Greece, Malta, Portugal and Germany, as ones of the richest in cultural heritage European countries. After presenting elements of the cultural legacy which are object of the tourism exploitation, we continue by presenting ways of exploiting the intangible cultural heritage in Romania, pointing out that even if the creative tourism is practiced in Romania, its specific activities are not promoted as creative, but rather as rural or experimental tourism.

#### **4. Cultural heritage – commodity for the cultural and creative tourism**

The cultural tourism explores both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, whereas the creative tourism relies mostly on the intangible one. The historical cultural heritage has provided over the time continuity, resilience and economic development (European Commission, 2015). The cultural legacy exploited through the creative and cultural sectors induces growth and development of the destination, positively affecting the local community, their feelings of belonging and stimulating the local pride.

Over the time, the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism have created important advantages such as: development of tourism products, revitalization of existing tourism products, experience in using creative technology to develop tourism and overcome the limitations of traditional cultural tourism models (OECD in Azizova & Huseyn, 2021, p. 670).

Even if the cultural heritage is considered a sector of the creative economy, its enhances the other creative and cultural sectors, as link between the cultural heritage and creativity in urban area has been noticed (Landry & Bianchini, 1995, p. 39; Florida, 2014, p. 39), these areas attract the creative class, concentrate and spread knowledge (Cerisola & Panzera, 2021, p. 15). This enhancement of the creative economy is created by employing or cooperating with the creative class in practicing the creative activities – who could better teach the tourists traditional folk dances or songs than a professional dancer or singer? In order to offer authentic creative experiences, the creative class is the human resource needed and the key element of the creative tourism offer. However, as the creative class is represented by highly skilled and talented professionals, the creative tourism benefits from exploiting talent and intellectual capital by generating sustainable high revenues and added value.

The tangible heritage materializes in monuments, buildings, historic sites and much more, while the intangible heritage is represented by customs and traditions. One of the measures taken to conserve, recognize and promote intangible heritage was to include them in the UNESCO World Heritage List alongside the elements of tangible heritage. The UNESCO heritage, as a plan for recognition of the worldwide culture, aims to preserve and to pass on the cultural heritage to future generations, conserving and highlighting the specific elements of each culture, as the followings table presents. Table 1 includes elements of intangible heritage recognised by UNESCO from ten European countries, including Romania. The other selected countries are geographically close to Romania or they share a similar historical past and determining so cultural similarities (Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine, Slovakia); the motivation of choosing the other countries listed in the table relies in their rich cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible (Greece, Malta, Portugal, Germany) – precious gems of the European culture and tourism.

Table no. 1 Intangible cultural heritage elements recognized by UNESCO

Crt. No.	Country	Intangible cultural heritage
1.	Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Căluș ritual</li> <li>- Doina</li> <li>- Craftsmanship of ceramics (Horezu)</li> <li>- Christmas-time ritual "Colindat"</li> <li>- Lad's dances</li> <li>- Traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship</li> <li>- 1st of March</li> </ul>
2.	Republic of Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christmas-time ritual "Colindat"</li> <li>- Traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship</li> <li>- 1st of March</li> </ul>
3.	Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bistritsa Babi</li> <li>- Nestinarstvo</li> <li>- Carpet-making in Chiprovtsi</li> <li>- Surova folk feast in Pernik region</li> <li>- Festival of folklore in Koprivshitsa</li> <li>- 1st of March</li> <li>- Bulgarian Chitalishte</li> </ul>
4.	Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Táncház method</li> <li>- Folk art of the Matyó</li> <li>- Safeguarding of the folk music heritage by the Kodály concept</li> <li>- Falconry</li> <li>- Blaudruck/Modrotisk/Kékfestés/Modrotlač</li> </ul>
5.	Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fujara and its music</li> <li>- Music of Terchová</li> <li>- Bagpipe culture</li> <li>- Puppetry</li> <li>- Multipart singing of Horehronie</li> <li>- Blaudruck/Modrotisk/Kékfestés/Modrotlač</li> <li>- Drotárstvo</li> </ul>
6.	Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Petrykivka</li> <li>- Cossack's songs of Dnipropetrovsk Region</li> <li>- Kosiv painted ceramics</li> </ul>
7.	Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practicing and organizing shared interests in cooperatives</li> <li>- Falconry</li> <li>- Organ craftsmanship and music</li> <li>- Blaudruck/Modrotisk/Kékfestés/Modrotlač</li> <li>- Craft techniques and customary practices of cathedral workshops (Bauhütten)</li> </ul>
8.	Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fado</li> <li>- Mediterranean diet</li> <li>- Cante Alentejano</li> <li>- Manufacture of cowbells</li> <li>- Falconry</li> <li>- Bisalhães black pottery</li> <li>- Craftmanship of Estremoz clay figures</li> <li>- Winter festivities, Carnival of Podence</li> </ul>
9.	Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Il-Ftira</li> </ul>

10.	Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mediterranean diet</li> <li>- Cultivating mastic on the island of Chios</li> <li>- Tinian marble craftsmanship</li> <li>- Momoeria</li> <li>- Rebetiko</li> <li>- Art of dry stone walling</li> <li>- Transhumance</li> <li>- Byzantine chant</li> <li>- Polyphonic Caravan</li> </ul>
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Source: [https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&country\[\]=00182&multinational=3&display1=inscriptionID#tabs](https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&country[]=00182&multinational=3&display1=inscriptionID#tabs) accessed at 27.11.2021

As the creative tourism involves practicing diverse cultural and creative activities in co-participation with the tourist, it provides for the latter an authentic sense of belonging to the visited destination. In most of the cases, the intangible cultural heritage elements can find fruition in any part of the destination country, while the travelers gain experience and the direct knowledge of the local / national culture.

### 5. Practicing creative tourism in Romania

In Romania, the concept of the creative tourism is little known and promoted, so the destinations where the creative tourism is or could be practiced are extremely few, even the official page of Romanian tourism does not consider this type of tourism particularly (Romania travel, online). The creative activities practiced in Romania are rather included in the offer of experimental, rural and cultural tourism practices, most of them aiming to disseminate customs and traditions of the Romanian folklore, as the following pictures prove.

Figure no. 1. Creative tourism practices in Romania: Pottery in the Land of Oaş (1), The cob village (2), Traditional house from Apuseni (3), Romanian folklore (4)



Source: <https://www.turism-taraoasului.ro/mestesugari-si-artizani/>,  
<https://cobvillage.ro/>, <https://www.wildventure.ro/cazare-casa-batrana-apuseni/>,  
<https://www.turism-taraoasului.ro/traditii-si-obiceiuri/> accessed at 22.11.2021

The cultural – creative sectors of Cultural Heritage and Art Craft spur the interest of Maramureș’s visitors, many visitors being attracted to Negrești – Oaş by various cultural and religious attractions, mountain activities, folklore, ethnography and also, crafts and handicrafts (Visit Țara Oaşului, online). Among the cultural attractions, the local tourism benefits from the pottery center, Vama, a place where tourists can learn and practice pottery.

In the village Zece Hotare from Bihor county, there is another possibility to adopt temporary the rural lifestyle and culture offered by the guest house “Casa Bătrână” (Wildventure, online). This guest house provides accommodation in a renovated old house, designed to provide the full experience of the Romanian village from years ago. The guests are either nostalgic Romanians looking for old times and roots or foreigners looking for the freedom of a simpler life, an oasis of peace, away from everyday life’s hustle.

The current pandemic of COVID – 19 virus imposed a set of travelling restrictions, thus a large number of Romanian tourists had to give up or weren’t able at all to travel abroad and so they were left only with the domestic tourism offer. Fortunately, Romania has numerous tourism attractions, many elements of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, mountain and seaside destinations, lots of opportunities for both rural and urban tourism, but regarding the creative tourism, the options are fewer. However, the Romanian tourism could benefit impressively from the development of the creative tourism, this one being a suitable option for ensuring the tourism activity’s continuity for those seasonally dependent destinations.

## 6. Conclusions

The creative tourism has emerged as niche or a developed type of the cultural tourism, in which the travellers are no longer simply visiting and sightseeing the cultural heritage of a destination; under the creative tourism auspicious, the tourists are getting involved in different activities which aim to create the experience of the local culture as lifestyle, customs and traditions. In this way, the sophisticated travelers learn and discover the local or national culture interactively creating, in the same time, more meaningful experiences.

The cultural tourism trades cultural heritage both its tangible and intangible elements, whereas the creative tourism relies more on the intangible cultural heritage, exploiting it by involving directly the travelers. The tangible cultural heritage is important and valuable also for the creative practices but they are not mandatory; the independence from the material heritage determines several positive effects of the creative tourism such as: possibilities to explore less popular areas, lower costs, avoidance of the overcrowded destinations, potential in ensuring the tourism activity’ continuity in season-dependent destinations, generation of higher added value due to the activities practiced and the high skilled employees, etc.

Globally, the creative tourism concept is very little known, meanwhile in Romania we have to admit this term faces a complete ignorance, although there are certain creative activities practiced as other types of tourism resembling or being related somehow to the creative one, or simply promoted as cultural, rural, adventure or experimental tourism practices.

As mentioned previously, the creative tourism is a niche of the cultural tourism, differing itself by the direct involvement of the travelers in practicing customs and traditions specific to the visited destination, and as in Romania the concept is rather unknown, the creative cultural practices are promoted as another type of tourism, mostly as rural, considering the elements of cultural heritage chosen to be promoted.

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