

INNOVATION, TOURISM AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract: *The entrepreneur has an important role in developing the tourism, and innovation is the engine that helps him to do just that. Innovation means doing things differently and applying this in tourism will help in creating a new experience for the tourists every time.*

Key words: *tourism, innovation, entrepreneurship*

INTRODUCTION

David Leslie declared “the environmental performance of tourism businesses is germane to the development of tourism throughout the globe [Hall, Kirkpatrick, Mitchell, 2005].

Academic studies regarding the links between tourism entrepreneurship and innovation are rare and few.[Lopéz, Buhalis, Fyall, 2009] Innovation means doing things differently (and perhaps better), so it is like a key that opens the door to development. One of the harshest criticisms of an industry is when we consider that it lacks the innovative spirit. [Blichfeldt, 2009]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Innovation is a multidimensional concept, so most of the times, especially in tourism, innovation is not something tangible.

Such innovation is a fairly pragmatic term that can include also minor adaptations of existing products and services.[Hjalager, 2002] Innovation is the essence of tourism as service sector, being vital to remain competitive in the market and to ensure continuous improvement of the visitor experience. [Ateljjevic, Page, 2009]

Entrepreneurial characteristics appear to be major factors in distinguishing between innovative organizations. [Pettitt, 2010]

While in developing countries tourism is often an engine for rapid growth, a number of Western countries are facing problems regarding tourism. Tourism is not an area where we can present innovations that have changed the course of history. [Scheidegger, 2011]

Contemporary research in tourism emphasizes the following innovations: [Blichfeldt, 2009]

- Innovations of the products (loyalty programs, ecological accommodation facilities, events based on local traditions) [Hjalager, 2002]
- Procedural innovations (management and monitoring computer systems, robots for cleaning and maintenance of self-service devices)
- Innovations in management (accountability by improving conditions at work)
- Logistics Innovation (create vertical links in the food industry and restaurants, the existence of tourist destinations computing systems, internet marketing)
- Institutional Innovations (reformulating financial incentives to restructure social and health concepts of tourism, access control systems and units in vulnerable areas, changes in the conditions for obtaining financing).

Many of these types of innovations but refers especially to large companies rather than small firms in tourism ..

According to Tetzschner and Herlau [Tetzschner, Herlau, 2003] innovation in tourism means the following:

1. Product innovation (new products and services for tourism)
2. Organizational innovation (new forms of organization and management)
3. Process innovation (new ways to make tourism known)
4. Logistics innovation (new ways to provide products or services to customers)
5. Market innovation (new ways of marketing and consumer behavior)

The Triple Helix model (Fig1) suggests that where mutual benefits exist in the intersection of the three stakeholders (public sector, private sector and universities/ research institutes) it may be possible to foster innovation. [Ateljevic, 2009]

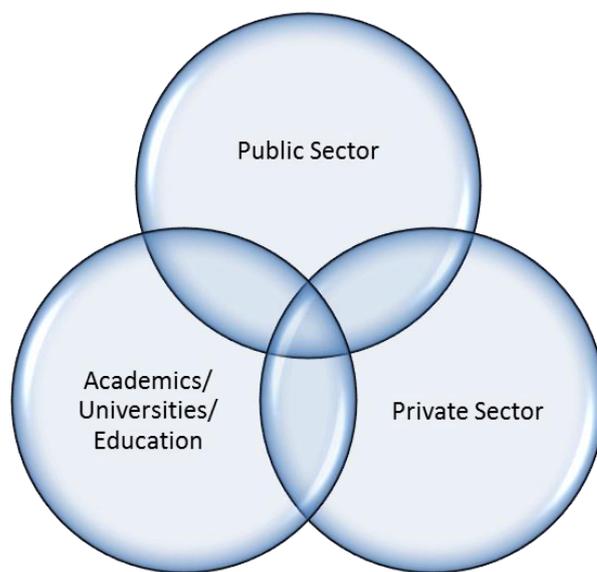


Fig. 1 The Triple Helix Model

Source: Ateljevic J., Page S., *Tourism and Entrepreneurship – International Perspectives*, Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2009, p.112

Hjalager argues that tourism entrepreneurs often start a business with limited opportunities and their ability to innovate is also limited. [Blichfeldt, 2009]

The impact of technological innovations will depend, in general not only by its inventors, but also by the creativity of potential users of new technologies. [Rosenberg, 2006]

Drucker said that innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship. The idea is that entrepreneurs go beyond other types of small businesses in terms of development potential, strategic objectives and innovation .. If an entrepreneur is trying to imitate a chain of restaurants belonging to a company with a long tradition in the field, it will not benefit from innovation, but it will be a mere copy of the results already clear a road crossing beaten by others ..

Blichfeldt quoting Getz and Petersen stated that only a small fraction of the tourism SME's are innovative, as most small businesses in this area are oriented to autonomous lifestyle, and held within families that are satisfied in following the example of other companies in the field, without improvement. Also to many small tourism companies lack the funds to be able to venture into the world of hard to find and obtain opportunities. [Blichfeldt, 2009]

Small businesses tend to follow these steps only after they have ensured that investments or changes are feasible. By its very nature, the tourism sector allows to observe what others do. Thus those who would like to become market leaders must

constantly innovate and also to expect that the advantage obtained immediately disappear. This is due to the fact that there is very little mutual trust among enterprises in tourism, they often saw themselves as competitors rather than colleagues. [Hjalager, 2002]

RESEARCH RESULTS

Modern technologies and tourism innovation. Ambassador Eric Scheidegger, member of the Secretariat of State for Business in Switzerland describes: Inventory of alpine tourism by British adventurers in the nineteenth century transformed over decades the poor villages in the Swiss mountains in today's prosperous tourist destinations such as Zermatt and St Moritz. But in regard to inventions such development is not yet on a par with the steam engine, the jet engine, the microprocessor or laser.[Scheidegger, 2004]

For tourism businesses, the Internet can serve as an information and reservation services are available a large number of tourists at relatively low cost. The Internet also provides a tool for communication between travel suppliers, intermediaries and final consumers. The Internet is revolutionizing the distribution of tourism information and sales.[Kim, 2004]

Any household with Internet access - and therefore access to Google - can get information immediately about any possible location on the earth's surface.[Rosenberg, 2006]

Xavier Decelle [Decelle, 2004] describes the existence of several essential steps to improve the innovative nature of the tourism industry:

- Improving the internal dynamics of innovation, companies should be actively involved in innovation
- Improving the efficiency of national innovation
- Improving the incentives for operators and employees
- Maintaining the consistency of the tourism industry and its relationship with society as a whole.

Pettitt [Pettitt, 2010] drew some conclusions about the nature of innovation in tourism:

- Many small businesses will not generate the level of investment in innovation needed to change substantially tourism product,
- Most product development activities related to minor investment rather than innovation
- The role of the entrepreneur is central to all innovative activity,
- Many of the original ideas of the new entrants firms reflect a combination of activities (cruise - restaurant, educational packages - accommodation).

In this case innovations are essential for survival. Innovation processes are possible in a number of areas. [Scheidegger, 2004] Hotels should specialize in a greater extent. Quality management must be extended beyond the individual level to cover the entire range of services, from when tourist come until when he leaves.

CONCLUSIONS

Development of modern transport such as train car or plane led to dramatic changes in terms of tourism, bringing a new dimension to travel. Distances are reduced every day, tourists can choose offerings from various corners of the world. The Internet and its facilities will also help communicate faster across the globe, changing the way we related to each other and positively affect people's chances information ..

Innovation is a very important change and the role of the entrepreneur is essential in innovative activity. Even Drucker said about knowledge that is a key resource in modern

times, replacing labor and raw materials. A growing number of innovative entrepreneurs will help economic development between these two elements where there is a strong relationship now. Stimulating entrepreneurial action will help to boost economic development by taking risks and seeking all opportunities.

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