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Creative Tourism Destination Competitiveness: An Integrative Model and Agenda for Future Research

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Abstract

Creative tourism has been approached from several points of view: products and processes, enabling elements, marketing, sustainability, etc. However, to our best knowledge, there is no integrative model that brings together all its dimensions and enables a 'bird's eye' perspective of creative destination competitiveness. As such, this article aims to present a competitiveness model for a creative tourism destination. The model presents four essential dimensions: core elements (products and processes, travelers and entrepreneurs), enablers (community engagement, stakeholders competences, and creative atmosphere), and developers (marketing and communication). Avenues for future research are presented based on the identification of areas to expand existing knowledge on creative tourism research, mainly by proposing measurement instruments which may contribute to operationalize the proposed model.

Keywords: Creative tourism; Destination Competitiveness; Creative Entrepreneur; Creative Atmosphere; Destination Management

1. INTRODUCTION

The central issue of this research is the competitiveness of a creative tourist destination. The topic of creative tourism has been the subject of intense research over the past two decades (e.g. Bruin and Jelinc, 2016; Richards and Wilson, 2006). For this purpose of this article we adopted the definition of Richards and Raymond (2000) where creative tourism is a kind 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” (p. 18). To illustrate this concept, the same authors consider the following creative tourism experiences: painting, geology, cooking and gastronomy, singing, crafts, sculpture, dancing or perfume-making.

The discussion about creative tourism destinations involves various topics such as creative tourists (Ali, Ryu, and Hussain, 2016; Tan, Kung, and Luh, 2012; Tan, Tan, and Luh, 2015), the atmosphere (Maitland, 2010; Santagata and Bertacchini, 2011), creative entrepreneurs (Komppula, 2014; Mottiar, 2007; Richards, 2011), destination marketing (Dias-sardinha, Ross, and Gomes, 2018), the role of public entities (Clare, 2012) or the creative product itself (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009; Drake, 2003).

We argue that all these factors are essential for a given place to become a creative tourism destination. In this vein, consolidating each factor is essential to strengthen the competitiveness of the creative tourist destination. A snowball effect is triggered, where better (not necessarily more) creative tourists will attract more creative entrepreneurs and vice versa. Furthermore, the inherent encounters add experiential value for tourists and increase the creation of knowledge about users (Sørensen and Jensen, 2015). At the same time, given the specificity of tourists and entrepreneurs, the destination must be properly promoted and developed around a vibrant atmosphere.

The subject of tourism destination competitiveness has been widely discussed at the academic level (Abreu-novais, Ruhanen, and Arcodia, 2016; Haugland, 2011; Hong, 2016) and practitioner level (e.g. World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index). However, in the research on creative tourism destinations, the concept of competitiveness is scarcely included in either the titles or keywords of articles. Simultaneously, research on creative tourism is fragmented, lacking the interconnection between the different perspectives. As such, the study of the competitiveness of a creative tourist destination requires an approach with an integrative model. Creative tourists are attracted to certain destinations because these offer experiences in which they can participate and co-create, in an atmosphere that enhances a production-led cultural context (Richards & Wilson, 2007; Suhartanto, et al., 2020).

The need for destination differentiation and gaining competitive advantage (Richards and Wilson, 2006) fostered the search for new tourism products to promote the destination

experience. In this context, experience-centered approaches to cultural tourism gain important terrain (Richards and Raymond, 2000). As a result, creative tourism emerges as a trend which places tourists at the center of the experiences and the entrepreneurs as facilitators of the tourist experience (Richards and Raymond, 2000). The existence of creative tourists makes the destination attractive for entrepreneurs too (Efe & Öztürk, 2014). However, in the context of creative tourism, the continued growth of this cycle is not necessarily a positive thing. Destination and creative entrepreneurs are not prepared to receive masses of tourists, who would cause a loss of competitive differentiation and would dilute the very concept of lifestyle entrepreneurship (Marchant and Mottiar, 2011; Mottiar, 2007) into something unnatural and less experiential.

This means that DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations) must take into consideration specific strategies for the promotion of a creative destination, seeking to achieve a balance regarding tourism flow. As a matter of fact, on the one hand, the number of tourists must allow the sustainability of creative businesses and entrepreneurs, many of them are integrated in small businesses or even working on their own (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000). On the other hand, however, marketing activities must take into consideration the sensitivity of the place, to avoid the massification of the destination (Maitland, 2010). Ultimately, DMOs must combine their strategies with self-marketing made by lifestyle entrepreneurs (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006).

The negative effect of over-tourism is also a very sensitive issue for the communities in which creative tourist destinations operate. The role of the community is essential, and the existence of consensus in the community regarding the projects for the creation or development of creative tourism is essential for its success (Dias-Sardinha et al., 2018; Dias et al., 2018).

Within this framework, the proposal of an integrative model of creative tourism requires the articulation of several actors, specifically: tourists, entrepreneurs, atmosphere, DMOs and the community. As such, the main objectives for this article are: (i) to identify the competitiveness factors of a creative tourism destination; and (ii) to establish an integrative model for the competitiveness of a creative tourism destination. This article expands existing knowledge about creative tourism by integrating into a single model the diverse dimensions contributing to a more attractive and sustainable creative destination. It also introduces the topic of destination competitiveness in the context of creative tourism, establishing a framework for future research in this field, and supporting decision-making in destination management and policy making.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of the competitiveness of a tourism destination was first addressed by Poon (1993). In her view, Porter's (1980) approach to competitiveness did not make a clear contribution to tourism, being, in her words, more suitable for industrial sectors and less for services, especially as it is a diverse and complex sector, involving a wide range of effectively touristic companies, but it is also composed of a wide variety of activities whose main function is not hospitality (Slattery, 2002). Thus, competitiveness in tourism is related to the development of tourist destinations "in places where tourism attractions and resources, and comparative and competitive advantages exist" (Vodeb, 2012, p. 51). In this context, the success of the tourism destination in world markets is defined by its competitiveness compared to that of alternative destinations (Andrades-Caldito et al., 2012; Dwyer, Forsyth & Rao, 2000).

However, the conceptualization of what constitutes competitiveness is not consensual in the literature. For example, for Jenkins (1999) it is associated with visitors' image of tourism destinations, that is, the global mental image of the destination (Andrades-Caldito et al., 2012). However, for Bahar and Kozak (2007) competitiveness is associated with its ultimate goal, which is the well-being of its inhabitants. Cvelbar et al. (2017) argue that it is measured through the total contribution of tourism to GDP (per tourism employee). Thus, apart from the lack of consensus on the definition, the existing definitions are complex and multidimensional, where the role of the various actors in the destination is not clear (Abreu-Novais, et al., 2016). Therefore there is a need to understand destination as a whole, and the success of individual actors and the destination as a whole will depend on their ability to act in a coordinated way in terms of resources, products and services (Beritelli, Bieger and Laesser, 2007). Consequently, destination can be understood as a unit that affects both the competitiveness of individual actors and destination (Haugland et al., 2011).

Given this plurality of concepts, it is important to discuss the main currents of academic thought. Competitiveness in tourism is generally associated with three main groups of thought (Dwyer and Kim, 2003; Fernando and Long, 2012). First, comparative advantage or price (or economic) competitiveness, giving special emphasis to the price factor and the economic characteristics of each country. In several markets, price sensitivity is quite high (Lee et al., 1996) and can be influenced by several factors, such as technological development, exchange rates, government policy, competition and the influence of multinational firms (Dwyer et al., 2000). Comparative advantage in tourism emerges from differences in physical, human, and capital endowments (Azzopardi, 2011).

Second, the strategic and management perspective, which is based mainly on the characteristics of firms. It seeks to recognize the importance of resources that influence the

creation and sustaining of competitive advantage. As examples of resources associated with destinations, the following can be considered: human resources skills; assets; organizational structure; product inimitability; information; etc.

Third, the political, historical and socio-cultural perspective, based on the social, political and cultural characteristics of competitiveness. It recognizes that aspects such as climate, morality, state power, cultural values and moral discipline can condition competitiveness.

Another division in the literature can be considered, based on the connotations associated with competitiveness (Dwyer and Kim, 2003). First, the macro perspective, focused on national aspects, whose main objective is to improve the real income of the destination community. In this situation, competitiveness is associated with a broader construct that encompasses social, cultural and economic variables. Secondly, the micro perspective, resulting from phenomena inherent to specific behaviors of companies that determine competitiveness.

As a result of these different perspectives, two approaches are proposed. The first approach concerns the comparison of destinations, confronting two or more destinations, as in the case of the studies on Hong Kong and Singapore (Wong, Bauer and Wong, 2008), the Asia Pacific of Enright and Newton (2005), comparison of Turkey with five countries of the Mediterranean basin: Spain, Italy, Greece, France and Cyprus (Bahar and Kozak, 2007) or based on the reality of Spain and Turkey (Kozak, 2003).

The second approach concerns particular features of competitiveness encompassing aspects such as the environment (Mihalič, 2000), technologies (Cimbaljević, Stankov, & Pavluković, 2019), positioning (Chako and Marcell, 2008), price competitiveness (Mangion, Durbarry and Sinclair, 2005), marketing and public policies (Martínez, Galván and Lafuente, 2014), and tourism funding (Petrevska and Serafimova, 2016).

3. CREATIVE TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS

Creative tourism has been developing rapidly since the 2000s. It reflects the growing desire of tourists to enhance their own creative potential but also the need for entrepreneurs, cities and creative regions to position themselves in an increasingly competitive global market (Richards and Wilson, 2007). Furthermore, creative tourism has become a source of differentiation as cultural heritage was transformed into commoditized experience modules (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). Culture has become a mass consumption phenomenon in many destinations, and creativity has occupied a central role in the transformation of traditional cultural tourism into

creative tourism (P. Remoaldo and Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019), especially by creating new tourism products that enhance the destination experience (Ross, Saxena, Correia, and Deutz, 2017b). Furthermore, the idealization of the product also changed. The modification implied a shift from discrete products with clearly marked boundaries to more diffused ones (Lampel and Germain, 2016) enhancing the role of tourist co-creation (Sørensen and Jensen, 2015).

However, destinations must address several challenges, by trying to embrace creative tourism as a strategy to overcome the congestion and trivialization of tourism experiences brought about by the cultural tourism massification model (Paula Remoaldo, 2019), in a context where space is a cultural production-led (Richards and Wilson, 2006).

The first challenge is attracting creative entrepreneurs or developers. Culture has become an important way to promote destination uniqueness (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). Creative tourism is related to a shared learning-by-doing experience embracing a range of experiential learning activities (De Bruin and Jelincic, 2016; Suhartanto, et al., 2020). Furthermore, this creative tourism of interactive engagement (Dias-sardinha et al., 2018) involves the promotion of local culture and authentic experiences (P. Remoaldo and Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019), “only attainable if the ‘lecturers’ in charge of conducting the creative activities are local people and are able to perform creative activities imbedded in the local/regional culture and heritage” (p. 87). The authenticity of the experiences is associated in the literature with daily life (Maitland, 2010) blurring the boundaries between producers and consumers (Lampel and Germain, 2016). In short, the inherent challenge is how to promote a balance between the attraction factors of creative entrepreneurs or developers of a specific place (e.g. way of life, money, local development) and the offering of experiences with the before-mentioned characteristics. In this context, the first research question can be stated as follows: what are factors attract creative developers to a specific location?

The second challenge is related to a binding factor: the creative atmosphere. Creative entrepreneurs contribute to a creative, vibrant atmosphere (Richards and Raymond, 2000; Richards and Wilson, 2006), a core element in the appeal of the life of a specific location (Maitland, 2010) to attract more mainstream tourists (Richards, 2011). Furthermore, a creative atmosphere represents the network structure of local systems of cultural production (Maitland, 2010), a key ingredient in tourism destination competitiveness. However, defining the creative atmosphere of a place may be difficult and not very helpful in attracting visitors and entrepreneurs to the location (Richards, 2011).

Marketing a creative destination is the third challenge. Despite recognizing the importance of creative tourism, several territories fail to position themselves in the industry (P. Remoaldo and Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019). Developing place marketing strategies based on themes

and narratives (Richards and Wilson, 2006) where tourists and entrepreneurs participate in co-creating the tourism experience (Dias-sardinha et al., 2018) is a difficult task. From the moment areas are advertised as undiscovered, they are likely to attract many visitors and lose much of their interest for certain visitors (Maitland, 2010). Furthermore, creative entrepreneurs, deeply involved with what they do that blurs the boundary between work and leisure (Richards and Wilson, 2006), are generally not interested in masses of tourists. This also poses a challenge for tourism marketers and DMOs, who must find new and subtler ways to attract the attention of potential visitors to these places (Maitland, 2010).

The fourth challenge is the acceptance of creative tourism projects and initiatives by the community and other stakeholders. The concept of creative tourism is important both in urban contexts and in small communities (Baixinho et al., 2020). In many cases, the development of a creative project is dependent on the involvement of other entities, usually external to the community (government, banks, NGOs) (Dias, Patuleia, & Dutschke, 2018). Figure 1 depicts these dimensions. The model presented intends to be a complement to traditional models of competitiveness of tourist destinations that incorporate several dimensions such as competition, price and macro-environmental context. Thus, the model presented below highlights the specific factors of these more comprehensive models.

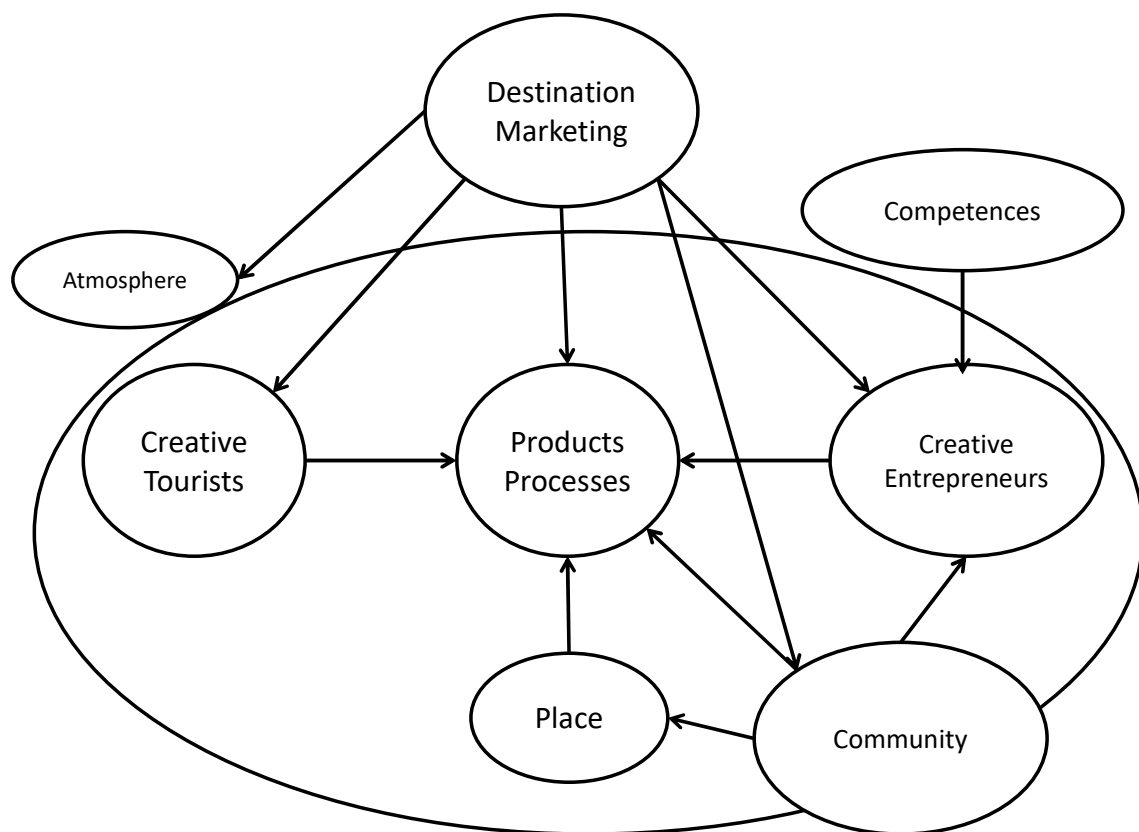


Figure 1. An integrative model for Creative Tourism Destination Competitiveness

3.1. The Core Components

Figure 1 presents the actors designated as core components. These various dimensions are developed in the following sections. Within the presented growing development of creative tourism, the topic has been the subject of extensive academic research, with the concept now becoming more blurred (Ross et al., 2017b). In this vein, creative tourism is recognized not as a coherent ‘niche’, but instead as a series of creative practices linking production, consumption and place (De Bruin and Jelincic, 2016; Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). Creativity in the context of creative tourism embeds the relationship with the cultural and human elements of a particular place (Richards and Wilson, 2007).

3.1.1. The link to place

The link to a place plays an important role in entrepreneurial performance (Hallak, Brown, and Lindsay, 2012). Tourism experiences consist of a combination of the local natural or cultural heritage, narratives and stories and the tourist's active participation or co-creation, all associated with the place as a distinctive factor (Anderson, 2012; Duxbury & Richards, 2019). Creative entrepreneurs benefit from being embedded locally (Bredvold & Skålén, 2016), facilitating access to the local culture by merely living and spending time locally (Valtonen, 2009). The link to place also fosters community involvement (Sofield, Guia, and Specht, 2017), allowing access to endogenous knowledge (Richards, 2011), which is tacit and difficult to imitate (Hoarau, 2014), thus a source of competitiveness (Bosworth and Farrell, 2011). As such, according to this approach, creative tourism destination competitiveness is based on differentiated experiences supported by the cultural environment of a specific place (Tan et al., 2015). Meaningful places have a high potential for person attachment (Lewicka, 2011), where “creative workers’ subjective, personal or emotional response to place will affect how they may use the attributes of that place for aesthetic inspiration, and that response will be molded by individual identities, perceptions and beliefs” (Drake, 2003, p. 512). The cultural characteristics of the destination represent the basis for destinations to develop their creative tourism activities (Tan et al., 2015). Moreover, place identity was found to have positive implications in entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy and in community support (Hallak et al., 2012). In this context, place appears to be the basis for the development of both product and providers, as well a tourist attraction factor.

3.1.2. The creative tourism product and processes

Besides place, creativity is also linked to people, processes and products (Kahl, Hermes da Fonseca, and Witte, 2009). By emphasizing the importance of the experience, the concept of

product has also changed, as the idea of a product with clearly defined boundaries has become blurred in the context of creative experiences (Lampel and Germain, 2016). On the other hand, the traditional dimensions of destination competitiveness are part of the model where dimensions such as people friendliness or local hospitality facilities are important for tourists (Zhang and Xie, 2018). Together with things, artifacts, and physical conditions, they foster a close relationship with individuals in the creativity process and the creative experience (Tanggaard, 2012). Vargo and Lusch (2008) referred to these tangible resources as *operand*. Since factors like vernacular heritage, service quality, and participatory experience are important components of creative tourism experiences (Zhang and Xie, 2018), tourist satisfaction of tourism destination benefits when intangible tourism resources become tangible (Park, Choi, and Lee, 2019).

Creative tourism also benefits from *operant* resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), which can be skills, expectations, creative potential and prior knowledge brought to co-created experiences either by tourists and entrepreneurs or by providers (Ross, Saxena, Correia, and Deutz, 2017a). Furthermore, by adopting a constructivist approach that emphasizes tourists' participatory process, the tourists' and providers' experiences can transform operand or tangible assets on operant resources (Ross et al., 2017a). The distinction between content and context is one of strategic importance. As stated by Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003) "(e)xperience has always existed in destinations. It was considered however as context rather than content. It was taken for granted - a by-product - rather than innovated (created and developed)" (p. 39).

According to the context presented in this section, creative tourism product is deeply related to the tourist's learning experience (De Bruin and Jelincic, 2016), implying that there is no separation between tourist and host, tourism spaces and other spaces (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). The combination of operand and operant factors facilitates the development of more genuine and differentiated experiences associated to the place (Richards, 2011), allowing entrepreneurs to align their offering to a growing tourist segment searching for place-related experiences (Arias & Cruz, 2018). By incorporating local features, the experiences are unique and constitute the basis of the competitiveness of small-scale businesses when compared to large companies' solutions (Mottiar, 2007). As such, knowledge associated to the place and tourism resources constitute a basis for global competitiveness (Guercini & Ceccarelli, 2020).

Furthermore, in line with tourism competitiveness models, a creative tourism product should be considered a complex mix of variables. As such, several marketing variables must be taken into account, such as price and competition (Mohammadi, Moharrer, & Babakhanifard, 2019). Push motivations were found to have significant impact on visitor behavioral intention and are strengthened by experience quality and perceived value. (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019). Suhartanto

et al. (2020) also found these variables to be essential predictors of tourist loyalty. Experience quality is the results of the tourist's perceptions of several dimensions, such as easiness, authenticity, newness and emotional and visual attractiveness (Mohammadi et al., 2019).

3.1.3. The creative travelers

Within the creative tourism field, the research referring to tourists is one of the most representative, covering several issues. Among the different topics studied, some authors have proposed a taxonomy of creative tourist (Tan, Luh, and Kung, 2014). Other have analyzed the several dimensions contributing to the creative experience, such as active tourist participation (De Bruin and Jelincic, 2016), interactions with the local context (Tan et al., 2015), or a more integrative model of the experiences (Tan et al., 2012).

Motivations, intentions and other cognitive processes were also examined. Specifically, topics covered the motivations and perceptions of authenticity (Park et al., 2019; Zhang and Xie, 2018), preferences (Ting and Lin, 2015), memories, satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Ali et al., 2016).

Creative tourists pertain to a specific niche, characterized by selecting their agenda, their capacity for engagement and interaction with destinations, skilled consumption and search for a narrative (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Tourists have become aware that creativity could be used as a way of self-expression (P. Remoaldo and Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019). Furthermore, the relationship they develop suggests new patterns of consumption (Lampel and Germain, 2016), where tourists play a central role in the experience networks (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). As a result, tourists' learning experience becomes a central characteristic of creative tourism (De Bruin and Jelincic, 2016).

With these participatory activities, the term co-creation is inextricably linked to experiences of creative tourism (Duxbury & Richards, 2019; Ross et al., 2017b). Co-creation exists when firms or providers work in close cooperation with experienced consumers and their intellectual capital (Romero and Molina, 2011). The co-creation concept gained momentum as a result of the service-dominant logic in other research fields (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In the field of tourism, the co-creation results from participative experiences that allow tourists to develop their creative potential by contacting with local people (Richards, 2011). Experience co-creation is the key to distinguishing creative tourism from mass cultural tourism (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). Moreover, co-creation allows the tourist to experience the locals' lifestyle in a specific creative atmosphere (Richards and Marques, 2012) and a reference for more authentic experiences (Maitland, 2010).

The impact of co-creation activities on destination competitiveness is decisive. First, because all the players acquire valuable knowledge about the tourist perspective (Sørensen and Jensen, 2015). Second, it allows a spiral of value creation (Lampel and Germain, 2016) increasing innovation and customer satisfaction (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

3.1.4. The creative entrepreneur

From the supply side, creative tourism entrepreneurs “are mostly operated by creative people, such as artists and lifestyle entrepreneurs and, therefore, the concepts and the development of creative tourism are always seen from the supply-led perspective” (Tan et al., 2015, p. 982). As such, the provider becomes a facilitator, empowering tourist self-development by allowing a more participative experience (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009; Ross et al., 2017a).

Creative entrepreneurs are also a specific kind of professionals that enjoy being creative, like tourists, and making a living from their hobby, for whom tourism is understood as a source of income (Richards and Wilson, 2006). They are also named lifestyle entrepreneurs (Marchant and Mottiar, 2011), not necessarily acting for money (Komppula, 2004) being ‘economically precarious but emotionally autonomous’ (Lampel and Germain, 2016). As such, for them the most important motives are the interesting and challenging nature of the industry, independence and freedom, and coming across a good opportunity (Komppula, 2014). Furthermore, they are recognized by the contribution they make to the destination’s sustainability (Shrivastava and Kennelly, 2013).

These entrepreneurs are essential to the development of a creative destination, acting as triggers of change, encouraging the participation of other actors (Koh and Hatten, 2002; Ryan, Mottiar, and Quinn, 2012). Therefore, creative tourism can be understood as a form of networked tourism, dependent on the value-creating relationships between providers and consumers (Richards and Marques, 2012). Entrepreneurs, firms and tourists participate in co-creating the tourism experience (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). Moreover, the degree of cooperation with other firms and the entrepreneur networks in which they participate represents an important source of competitive advantage for small firms (Dias, González-Rodríguez & Patuleia, 2020a; Mottiar, 2007). On the cooperation field, previous research included third-party importance for the development of creative tourism projects (Dias et al., 2018).

The link to place is an important issue to explore to understand the competitiveness of a creative tourism destination. Creative tourism providers are expected not only to guide tourists, but also to participate in crafting imaginative travel experiences (Ross et al., 2017b). Since entrepreneurs’ performance was found to be linked to the place identity of tourism entrepreneur

(Hallak et al., 2012), it is important to study the factors that contribute to attract native or adopted innovators which foster to a place's creative and vibrant atmosphere (Richards and Wilson, 2006), especially because lifestyle entrepreneurs have limited resources (Lampel and Germain, 2016; Richards and Wilson, 2006).

Examples of creative tourism entrepreneurs are specified by Dias et al. (2020c) as restaurants, hotels, hostels, tours, crafts and other experiences where tourists play an active role in the experiences, mostly related with lifestyle activities. The role of creative entrepreneurs in the innovation and competitiveness of destinations is also the result of their connection to the place and the development of community-centered strategies (events, festivals, museums, etc.) (Dias et al., 2020b). For these entrepreneurs, place give uniqueness to the experiences provided by the tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs and, simultaneously, the development of more sustainable business models Dias et al. (2020b). As such, creative entrepreneurs are particularly interested in the preservation of the environment and local social traditions and way of life. Besides place, the networks of local stakeholders are another crucial source of differentiation and competitiveness, contributing to more valuable and immersive experiences and, consequently to innovation (e.g. new narratives, products and services).

In brief, this section alerts to the importance of studying entrepreneurs' attraction and retention factors for a given place. Koh and Hatten (2002) suggest two strategies to increase the levels of local tourism entrepreneurship: (i) increase the number of tourism entrepreneurs, and (ii) create an environment conducive to tourism investment.

3.2. The Enablers

In addition to the core factors, the literature suggests the existence of other factors that strengthen their effect on competitiveness. Figure 1 shows these three factors: community support, atmosphere and competence development. They are detailed in the following sections.

3.2.1. The community

Creative tourism is linked to place and the community (Hallak et al., 2012; Sofield et al., 2017). It benefits from local community lifestyles, sensibilities and thematic associations (Drake, 2003).

However, creative tourism destinations were also found to be developing instruments in the context of rural communities with few resources and without a clear view of the path to follow to generate profit from creativity associated with local resources and practices (Dias et al., 2018). For this reason, the importance of the participation of the host community in tourism development projects planning is advocated. This participation, which should include the sharing of benefits as well as the type and scale of tourism development in their locations, is at the core of participatory tourism (De Bruin and Jelincic, 2016).

Since community support is found to be linked to place identity (Hallak et al., 2012), it plays an essential role both in attracting tourists, due to place identity (Daly et al., 2021), and on the basis of the competitiveness of entrepreneurs as it provides unique differentiation factors, allowing them to compete with large companies (Bredvold and Skålén, 2016). An example of this development is the conversion of local knowledge into entrepreneurial innovativeness and self-efficacy in a process that starts with local knowledge acquisition, namely the collection the specificities of the place through informal channels, which can be converted into new products or services and new narratives (Dias et al., 2020b). For this to happen, local knowledge has to be adequately appropriated by the firm so that it can be used in experiences and products. Thus, local knowledge must be integrated into organizational routines and embedded in tourist experiences and communication strategies (Dias et al., 2020c).

From a different perspective, places become the result of a co-creation process, acquiring new and differentiated meanings, both for service providers, local communities and visitors (Richards and Marques, 2012). The community feeds creative tourism products with imagination and emotions by integrating different groups or subcultures within the local population (Drake, 2003). As such, the community can enhance the product (or a service), including product design, marketing communication and creating the overall brand experience (Romero and Molina, 2011).

In this approach, the local community can act as an activator of creativity and innovation, increasing people's propensity to invest in their cognitive skills and knowledge (Santagata and Bertacchini, 2011). Moreover, the effect is expected to bi-directional, since creative processes promote the articulation of place attachment and memory making among both visitors and residents (Duxbury, Silva, and Vinagre de Castro, 2018).

In short, the community seems to play an important role in the development of the core elements of the proposed model. The cooperation with tourists and other stakeholders are key issues in place-making in the context of local communities (Dias et al., 2018; Sofield et al., 2017).

3.2.2. The atmosphere

Place plays an essential role in the development of creative tourism activities (P. Remoaldo and Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019). On the one hand, it needs to have attractions, as it is an essential motivating factor in the buying behavior of tourists and visitors. On the other hand, creative entrepreneurs also need to be attracted to a particular location. Besides the characteristics of the place that are attractive to any kind of entrepreneur (infrastructure, safety and health, accessibility, etc.), creative people also make their decision based on the (creative) atmosphere that exists in a certain place (Dias et al., 2021). To do so, the place needs life, it needs an atmosphere that binds place, tourists and entrepreneurs in an attractive environment. The atmosphere and sense of place represent attraction factors for creative travelers (Maitland, 2010; Richards, 2011). As pointed out by Richards and Marques (2012) “the main drivers of creative tourism development therefore currently seem to be the cultural creatives in search of like-minded souls and economic support for their lifestyles, and tourists seeking creative entry points into local communities” (p. 9).

From the marketing literature, atmosphere concerns the “conscious design of space to create certain effects on buyers” (Kotler, 1973, p. 50). As mentioned by Heide and Grønhaug (2006) the “atmosphere as created by the interaction between individuals and their environment” (p. 273).

Although the creative ‘atmosphere’ of a place is very difficult to define (Richards, 2011), several characteristics emerge. It is understood as a cultural production-led space where the atmosphere results from local innovators (Richards and Wilson, 2007). This implies that the term atmosphere includes some elements of the environment that go beyond the individual (Heide and Grønhaug, 2006). Furthermore, atmosphere is associated with the traditional landscape and folk performances (Park et al., 2019). It is also the result of the quality of the relationships, ideas, and organizational structures (Santagata and Bertacchini, 2011) of a specific place.

The link to place is another important characteristic, especially when the context permits an authentic engagement in the real cultural life of the place (P. Remoaldo and Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019). More transcendental dimensions can be considered, since consumer experiences seem to be directly affected by sensory and emotional stimuli from the retail environment (Biehl-missal and Saren, 2012).

The co-creative context can include intangible and symbolic aspects, and situates itself in the sphere of the emotional and spiritual, where the individual actively looks for ways to follow a certain lifestyle in a specific creative atmosphere (Richards and Marques, 2012). The scale used measures physical atmosphere incorporating the following aspects: quiet/noisy; innocent/sinful; sleepy/arousing; overcrowded/sparse (Hosany, Ekinci, and Uysal, 2006) To put it briefly, a creative atmosphere is the result of an intense flow of ideas and information within a community (Santagata and Bertacchini, 2011), which plays an important role in

creative destination competitiveness, contributing to attract tourists, entrepreneurs and other actors as well as establishing a link to the place.

3.2.3. The competences

Fostering competitiveness is closely related to the acquisition of competences by the various actors. The resource-based view argues that sustained competitive advantage derives from the resources and capabilities a firm controls that are valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and not substitutable (Barney, Wright, and Ketchen, 2001; Wernerfelt, 1995). Creative lifestyle entrepreneurs tend to follow market opportunities originated by low entry barriers, instead of making more rational business decisions (Hjalager, Kwiatkowski and Larsen, 2018). Furthermore, those opportunities are less demanding in capital and skills (Ioannides and Petersen, 2003), which raises concerns of competitiveness due to the lack of experience and resources (Marchant and Mottiar, 2011).

In spite of being a clearly insufficiently addressed field within creative tourism research, some clues can be identified in the literature. For example, Dias et al. (2018) found that the provision of technical, managerial and market orientation knowledge had strong implications for creative tourism in less developed communities by promoting local entrepreneurship, attracting new talent and developing residents' skills.

In the rural context, Komppula (2014) identified several important factors affecting entrepreneurs' success, such as the quality of the product, the capabilities of the entrepreneur or access to capital.

Relational capital (Duxbury et al., 2018; Lampel and Germain, 2016) and knowledge transfer (Duxbury et al., 2018; Richards, 2011) were other competences that should be part of the entrepreneurs' skill set, which still depend on their intuition or on copying best practices to design or develop new creative products (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009).

The lack of production-oriented creativity or creative abilities of the experience creator are weaknesses pointed out to creative entrepreneurs (Richards and Wilson, 2006).

At another level, recent research suggests that new technological skills are increasingly needed to create experience-centric networks based on highly interactive and collaborative experience environments (Romero and Molina, 2011).

Besides relational, technological and human capital, the development of destination competitiveness is also related to the existence of institutional capital (Santagata and Bertacchini, 2011), meaning that other actors (other than tourists and entrepreneurs) should also hold more advanced competences (e.g. DMOs, educational system, financial institutions) as suggested by Dias et al. (2018).

3.3. The Developers

A third level in the model is that of developers. They represent the institutions managing and promoting the creative tourism destination in a sustainable manner. Figure 1 shows how they interact with the other elements of the model.

3.3.1. The destination marketing

Marketing and communicating a creative tourism destination requires a subtle approach (Maitland, 2010). It involves targeting specific groups from both the demand side and the supply side. Marketing massively creative tourism has dangerous implications in the authenticity of contents (Zhang and Xie, 2018). The simple fact of promoting an unknown place can have as likely consequence losing much of the appeal for many visitors (Maitland, 2010).

The fragile context of creative destinations should balance the lifestyle that entrepreneurs want to preserve (Richards, 2011) and the sustainability of their business, i.e. to earn sufficient money from tourists or other sources to maintain their way of life (Komppula, 2004).

On the demand side, the promotion of creative tourism by offering hands-on experiences and involvement, requires that the DMOs should be able to identify and communicate with creative tourists who are experienced and actively pursue unique learning and participative experiences (Zhang and Xie, 2018). The first step is to know and understand their cultural backgrounds and travelling motivation (P. Remoaldo and Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019).

The DMOs also have other concerns, indirectly linked to tourists and entrepreneurs. They should ensure that other factors contribute to competitiveness, such as the support and participation of the local government, tourism development funding, strategic planning (Komppula, 2014), consensus and cooperation between the several actors (third parties, financing institutions, other businesses and institutions) (Dias et al., 2018) and assure the community support for tourism. More specifically, the role of the DMOs has been associated with planning, marketing and destination management. However, recent research has shown that DMOs can also play a more active role in promoting the innovation and qualification of local businesses and other stakeholders (Czernek, 2017). In the context of creative tourism, generating a creative atmosphere and attracting entrepreneurs is also an important role to be played by DMOs (Dias et al., 2021). As argued by Mottiar (2007), in the case of creative tourism development, the government cannot necessarily use traditional policy instruments to influence their operations.

4. AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The model presented sought to bring together in an integrative model a wide range of research conducted. The empirical testing of its various dimensions will definitely contribute to its consolidation and validation. The following sections discuss the current state of research in this field and propose some investigation paths.

4.1. Entrepreneurs

The research focusing on lifestyle entrepreneurs need a lot more attention (Sun & Xu, 2019; Thomas et al., 2011). Their businesses are run using lifestyle objectives, as such traditional business models cannot be applied (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011; Carlsen, Morrison, & Weber, 2008). Furthermore, they operate in constantly changing environments (García-Rosell, Haanpää and Janhunen, 2019) and they lack the skills and resources to become more competitive (Ioannides and Petersen, 2003). Accordingly, further research on creative destination competitiveness should bring more insights about these entrepreneurs: to learn, in more depth, the profile and competences of the creative entrepreneur, and understand the factors promoting the attraction or retention of entrepreneurs in relation to a creative destination.

The research on creative entrepreneurs has been predominantly qualitative (e.g. Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Komppula, 2004, 2014; Marchant and Mottiar, 2011; Mottiar, 2007). Research addresses several topics such as common characteristics (Marcketti, Niehm, and Fuloria, 2006; Mottiar, 2007), the relationship between entrepreneurs' quality of life and enterprise growth (Peters, Frehse, and Buhalis, 2009), motivations (Marchant and Mottiar, 2011) or entrepreneurial identity (Bredvold and Skålén, 2016). In this vein, quantitative studies based on surveys can complement these studies. This complementarity benefits from establishing a link to creative destination competitiveness, by exploring the role of variables such as link to place, networks and community participation, link to the community, capacities and local knowledge absorptive capabilities, as well how they correlate with entrepreneurs' willingness to stay, and deviation factors. One difficulty is to obtain a significant sample of these entrepreneurs, because, due to the strong work-lifestyle link, their willingness to respond will be limited. As such, some questions arise:

- How to attract and retain creative entrepreneurs?
- What are the main creativity and innovation drivers and barriers?
- How do they explore the link to place to gain competitive advantage?

4.2. Atmosphere

Creative entrepreneurs and tourists value the place quality of life as a primary factor in determining the business location (Sun & Xu, 2019). As such, the decision on location is based

on several criteria which are not necessarily rational (Arias & Cruz, 2018; Morrison, 2006). Studies focusing on the attraction and retention factors of entrepreneurs and creative tourists do not allow for a comprehensive model to be established. Some authors analysed some topics independently. For example, Richards (2011) reports the importance of a 'stimulating atmosphere' while Hoarau (2014) indicates that a culture of entrepreneurship is important to attract both entrepreneurs and tourists, and Sun and Hu (2019) defend that a sustainable market is necessary to support creative businesses. As identified, the atmosphere is the binding element of a creative destination. However, it is difficult to define a creative atmosphere (Richards, 2011). As such, this poses a challenge for further research: to identify the characteristics of a vibrant atmosphere, a core feature of creative destinations (Richards and Wilson, 2007). Tourism literature specifically addressing a place's vibrant atmosphere is scarce. Furthermore, although increasing academic attention is being directed at the subject of entrepreneurship in tourism, the role of the link to place is still underexplored in the TLE context (Kibler, Fink, Lang, & Muñoz, 2015). The key issue is that there are no consensual definitions of creative atmosphere, and no measures to assess the degree of 'attractiveness'. Thus, an important avenue for research is to propose a measure to evaluate a vibrant atmosphere. Similar research followed an exploratory approach based on scale development (Bassi, 2011; Chen and Raab, 2017; Thomas, Quintal, and Phau, 2018; Tsaor, Yen, and Teng, 2018; Wang, Hsieh, Chou, and Lin, 2007) in order to gain "some insights into tourists' thoughts and experiences" (Tan et al., 2012, p. 160). In this vein, scale development is suggested to measure 'creative vibrant atmosphere'. Some questions remain unanswered:

- What is a creative atmosphere?
- What drivers promote a creative atmosphere?
- How does a creative atmosphere contribute to attract both entrepreneurs and tourists to a specific place?

4.3. DMOs

Previous research suggests that, besides participating in creative experiences, tourists also play a key role in destination marketing activities (P. Remoaldo and Cadima-Ribeiro, 2019; Richards, 2011). This sort of co-marketing activities need further development so that the complexity of developing the image and identity of a destination can be more fully understood (Dias-sardinha et al., 2018). Several actors contribute to this complexity. Tourists generates a growing range of tourist-created content (de Souza, Mendes-Filho and Buhalis, 2019; Richards, 2011; Romero and Molina, 2011) which is not controlled by the DMOs. Entrepreneurs and creative businesses promote their activities independently (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006). The

DMO is part of this puzzle, by promoting the destination itself as a key activity, but also by articulating the other actors' entrepreneurship (Marchant and Mottiar, 2011; Mottiar, 2007). Against this background, some questions can be raised:

- How to promote a creative destination without attracting mass tourism?
- How to promote a creative destination to please creative entrepreneurs?
- How to integrate creative entrepreneurs' own communication strategies into the destination image?

For the DMOs, acting in this context requires specific capabilities and marketing activities which should include new and subtler ways of raising potential visitors' awareness (Maitland, 2010; Richards, 2019). In this vein, further research could investigate the configurations of DMOs' marketing capabilities and marketing activities that lead to high performance. To do so, studies should envisage a qualitative and quantitative approach. The difficulty of conducting quantitative organizational research has been acknowledged, specifically obtaining a reasonable sample. The results of this method can be combined with a qualitative approach configured, for example, through focus group sessions with DMO managers. This mixed-method study strategy allows researchers to avoid inconsistent conclusions caused by just focusing on quantitative or qualitative, as recommended by Creswell and Clark (2017).

4.4. Creative Tourists

When comparing the amount of creative tourism research, among the several actors considered in this study (DMOs, entrepreneurs, place), tourists or the demand side are the ones with more articles published. Several topics have been the object of empirical research, such as the involvement of active tourist participation (De Bruin and Jelincic, 2016), motivations for participating in creative activities and perceptions of authenticity (Zhang and Xie, 2018), model of tourists' creative experience (Tan et al., 2012), taxonomy of creative tourist (Tan et al., 2014), the interactions of tourists with their surrounding socio-material factors (Tan et al., 2015), cognition and preferences (Ting and Lin, 2015) or the influence of experiences on memories, satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Ali et al., 2016). This list is not exhaustive.

Considering this extended research at this point, the development of further empirical studies is likely to make a modest contribution to the literature. However, it is noticed that the existing research is scattered over many topics. It would be helpful for future research in creative destination competitiveness to adopt an integrative approach which may foster an understanding of the creative tourist behavior and motivations. As such, a literature review

targeted at pinpointing the factors that attract and retain creative tourists is suggested. In this area, several questions can be asked:

- Which customer journeys can be considered?
- What factors contribute to the willingness to recommend?
- What factors contribute to willingness to pay more (for more value-added experiences)?

4.5. Community

The community plays an important role in the context of creative tourism, being not only a source of inspiration for new experiences and for acquiring local knowledge (Hoarau, 2014), but also a fertile ground to identify new entrepreneurial opportunities (Yachin, 2019). Furthermore, collaborative activities within the community provide an interesting space to engage local stakeholders (Yachin, 2019), build trust (Czernek, 2014), and add value to creative tourist experiences (Dimmock, et al., 2014; García-Rosell, et al., 2019).

This provides an interesting field to explore, especially to expand existing knowledge about the antecedents of cooperation around creative experiences. It will be interesting to understand to what extent stakeholders can be regularly involved in the activities offered to tourists. Or to further explore the cooperative strategies in poor communities through creative tourism, as suggested by Dias et al. (2020a).

Another field to explore is sustainability in the context of creative tourism. The sustainability of a tourism destination is more related with small-scale tourism and with lifestyle entrepreneurs than with big corporations (Shrivastava and Kennelly, 2013). The former are more concerned with buying locally, hiring local people and with the preservation of the local culture, natural environment and traditions (Burnett and Danson, 2004; Jack and Anderson, 2002; Morrison, 2002). Furthermore, developing tourism within a community also contributes to increase visitors' awareness and knowledge about the community's way of life, contributing to value their local traditions (Giampiccoli and Mtapuri, 2017), which is an important dimension of creative tourism. As such, further research should aim to evaluate the contribution of the local community and other stakeholders to the development of the competitiveness of creative tourism destinations.

Given the complexity of studying this area, due to the existence of multiple actors, a qualitative approach is suggested, such as in-depth interviews, focus group and comparative or

longitudinal case studies. These studies could consider the following questions as starting points:

- What factors promote a more intense participation of the local community in creative experiences?
- To what extent are community stakeholders willing to participate and co-create creative experiences?
- What barriers can be found in the community participation in creative projects?

5. CONCLUSION

This article aims to present an integrative model of creative tourism destination competitiveness. This is a topic that has been earning attention from academics and has been the subject of analysis in its various dimensions. Researchers have explored aspects such as the motivations or characteristics of creative tourists, entrepreneurs, the concept of creativity, the importance of the place, among other topics.

However, the competitiveness of tourist destinations, which basically includes all these aspects, has not been explored. Thus, this article presents a first approximation to an integrating model resulting from an analysis of the existing literature. This model is intended to be a basis for empirical studies that can look into the interrelation between the various dimensions presented and add their critical perspectives.

A second objective of this article was the presentation of guidelines for future research, so that each of its dimensions can be explored in greater depth and, in future, develop models for evaluation and measurement of creative tourism destination competitiveness, similarly to the competitiveness models of tourist destinations (see Hanafiah, Hemdi and Ahmad, 2016). These existing models do not reflect the essence of creative tourism. As such, no attempt was made to adapt existing models, but rather to create a new model.

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