

The Role of Tourism Entrepreneurship in the Iberian Peninsula



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Abstract This chapter highlights the importance of tourism for the sustainable development and economic growth of the Iberian Peninsula, both as a destination market and as a destination for investment and technological innovation, particularly through the accelerated digitalization of business models. The importance of fostering opportunity entrepreneurship is also justified, replacing the traditional forms of necessity entrepreneurship, as a lever for growth in the regions of the Iberian Peninsula, including those with low population density, which are opportunities to be explored with regard to the creation of new entrepreneurial units linked to quality of life, wellness, water and air quality, and spirituality. An agenda of business opportunities to be explored is presented, regarding the intensification of the use of new information and communication technologies in the tourism sector, tending to the digitalization of business models. The remaining 13 chapters that make up this volume, which is truly innovative in terms of mapping entrepreneurial initiatives in the tourism sector, as well as analysing the expectations of consumers of tourism

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services against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, are briefly presented.

The importance of tourism for the Iberian economy is unquestionable, above all through exploitation of the natural resource capital favourable to exporting services and attracting flows of people, expenditure, and investment. The recent visibility of tourism entrepreneurship in the context of the global pandemic crisis, as well as the importance attributed to innovation and reinforcing the export capacity of tourism services makes it an appropriate time to produce a volume devoted to the subject of tourism entrepreneurship in the Iberian Peninsula. This region includes two countries with a common history and different resources, cultures, and landscapes including the Mediterranean Basin, the Algarve coast and the northern and western coasts of the Atlantic.

In terms of the literature considered relevant, Kibedi (1979) was one of the first authors to discuss tourism entrepreneurship, in the scope of a national study reporting the attempts by the Ministry of Industry and Tourism in Ontario (Canada) to train and educate business-people in tourism. However, it should be underlined that this remains a little-explored topic in the literature on entrepreneurship, as the presence of business activity in the sector is generally dealt with in a very wide-ranging way (Koh & Hatten, 2002). Entrepreneurship stresses opportunities to create and manage business initiatives (Zhao et al., 2011), and so is of considerable importance in the formation of tourist destinations. The study by Russel and Faulkner (2004) found a significant relation between innovative individuals (entrepreneurs) and a tourist destination's development. Also noted is the importance given to tourism entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas (Hernández-Maestro & González-Benito, 2014). These authors indicated that here, it is not just one more form of subsistence entrepreneurship, but rather the entrepreneurship of opportunity, pointing towards more evolved forms of qualified entrepreneurship in order to create supplementary income (Getz & Carlsen, 2000). These require articulation with the production and distribution of endogenous products, directed towards environmental transition, as well as intensive incorporation of new information and communication technology, aiming for full digitalization of business.

Added to this is the need to advance knowledge on forms of female entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas, leading genuine family-based businesses (Tinsley & Lynch, 2001). The presence of women in tourism entrepreneurship is also shown by the predominance of micro-firms linked to tourism, namely hotel and catering units (Getz & Carlsen, 2005). Concerning tourism entrepreneurs' motivation, the literature reveals that objectives related to a more rural, healthy, and sustainable lifestyle are particularly important, together with a desire to live in the village, build social networks and be an integral part of a community with its own identity (Bosworth & Farrel, 2011; Getz & Carlsen, 2000), or promoting endogenous products (Lopes et al., 2018) and certified productions with brands linked to places (Lopes et al., 2021).

These are examples of different motivations; it will be interesting to explore in future studies, as entrepreneurs' preferences seem to be changing towards a culture of greater quality of life and a certain emotional and spiritual balance. The aim is to ensure people's internal balance, something in short supply in places with a greater density of population and economic activities.

In tourism entrepreneurship, the place and territorial component cannot be separated from the product/service, being an integral part of both the tourism supply and demand. This is a differentiating element, not only in the Iberian Peninsula explored here, but also in each and every location, where the place, its bio-diversity, natural resources, customs, and cultural heritage affect the interaction between both sides of the market, making them unique, authentic, and unrepeatabe.

In this line of thought, previous studies indicate that the identity of local tourism entrepreneurs has a direct and significant influence on business self-efficiency and the support given to the community, which translates into the improved performance of business units (Hallak et al., 2012, 2015). Few studies focus on the tourism entrepreneur ecosystem, despite finding relevant indications with regard to rural tourism (Dana et al., 2014; Kline et al., 2014), forming the above-mentioned but little-explored dimension of the place.

A good starting point for future studies on tourism entrepreneurship should be based on exploring established theories, such as Transaction Cost Theory, the Theory of Resources and Capacities, Network Theory and Stakeholder Theory. However, new research initiatives can be more ambitious and try to explore the adherence of theoretical approaches included in the body of Entrepreneurship Theory, namely the Theory of Knowledge Filter, the Theory of Dynamic Competences and, more recently, the Theory of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems.

In strategic and operational terms, one of the lines of public policy action to explore in the Iberian Peninsula, as regards tourism entrepreneurship, has to include positioning this differentiated area as a centre of international reference in innovation and entrepreneurship, in relation to environmental and digital transition.

According to the important statement of an invited practitioner, Roberto Antunes, the Executive Director of NEST, Tourism Innovation Center, Portugal, we can expect tourism entrepreneurship to contribute to changing the tourism system. As in society in general, so far there has been an excessive focus on quantifiable results and less on people, so we will have to reformulate everything and focus more on other intangible, sustainable, environmental, emotional, and spiritual aspects.

Regarding environmental transition, and incorporating what we are still learning from the current pandemic, travellers will be more demanding in terms of their choice of airlines, cruises, apartments, hotels, and other providers. In addition, tourism will have to concentrate on sustainability and proximity, to recover. It will be necessary to reduce accommodation and improve the infrastructure in many crowded areas of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as devoting renewed efforts to low-density, peaceful destinations.

Inland tourism will benefit greatly from this new form of development. Spain is moving towards transformative tourism where we must specify the extension of the resort model (traditional model) to urban centres and "exclusive" areas, with tourism

activity linked to the maintenance of networks of affection and long-term labour, cultural and social activism collaborations. In turn, Portugal has developed interesting projects concerning historical villages and is launching new initiatives devoted to knowledge of rural villages and interconnectable rural hubs.

Looking ahead, tourism will establish itself as future-oriented industry, able to generate positive sustainable impacts rather than being an opportunity for positive economic shifts. It can become a force for good and will become more professional the more it pushes its strategies to deliver qualitative positive impacts. Furthermore, tourism will force a global discussion more than any other, being probably the third biggest export in the world and requiring more connection and alignment rather than sovereignty and economic egoism.

Portugal and Spain are good examples of tourism entrepreneurship with a developed infrastructure in the service sector, ranking among the most visited countries in the world and attracting millions of travellers annually due to their beaches and pleasant weather, the abundant artistic heritage of both countries and the gastronomy. In addition, these two nations are very rich in terms of cultural heritage at a global level, due to the large number of civilizations that left their mark and legacy on the Iberian Peninsula.

Both can represent a paradigm of being developed economies in which tourism is one of the major industries and provides wealth, well-being, and employment. Especially in Portugal, value is generated by thousands of micro and small companies, and entrepreneurs, and this is an opportunity as it builds tourism with thousands of repertoires, curiosities, and unheard narratives, i.e. what tourists now look for. This does not happen in highly concentrated markets, where the offer is extensive and in the hands of a few. Also promising is their predominance when it comes to achievements in sustainability. Portugal and Spain are well positioned to be world-wide references in this matter.

Regarding digital transition, since the pandemic, the adoption of digital tools has been enormous. Solutions have been met for eliminating distance. Chatbots, QR codes, biometrics reading, and others are now a reality, but also for promoting social inclusion and providing an effective answer to special needs and disabilities. A new reading of the changes in demand has opened up great opportunities for entrepreneurs, for example, to succeed in attracting Digital Nomads, when even during the pandemic, demand has been greater than the supply.

Considering the new trends and the rapid changes occurring, the tourism sector in the Iberian Peninsula should be strengthened, by supporting different forms of tourism entrepreneurship, through planned, articulated activities in the public and private sphere, namely by:

- (1) Stimulating an entrepreneurial culture through developing entrepreneurship programmes in the hotel and tourism school network and other initiatives targeting micro, small, and medium-sized companies, and business-people in the sector, as well as supporting events to share good entrepreneurial practices;

- (2) Promoting access to finance sources, developing and managing lines of financial support for entrepreneurship, and promoting initiatives to join start-ups and investors;
- (3) Facilitating innovation in tourism, giving specialized support to start-ups in terms of knowledge transfer and advice, regarding financing instruments and support for the internationalization of start-ups, through participation in international tourism fairs;
- (4) Matching the tourism demand for, and supply of, endogenous products, with brand certification and image, linked to the bio-economy and sustainability;
- (5) Promoting the adoption of circular economy and eco-efficiency practices, in relation to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in activities of tourism entrepreneurship; and
- (6) Stimulating the entrepreneurial ecosystem, promoting agents' coordination, forming partnerships in developing programmes of horizontal and vertical acceleration in tourism, forming a network of incubators, and developing a network of mentors to promote new ideas and projects in tourism.

As proposed by Leitão et al. (Leitão et al., 2021), on the one hand, the relation between entrepreneurship and innovation, and on the other, the relation between innovation and competitiveness, mean that the study of tourism entrepreneurship is of fundamental importance for tourist regions' sustainable development and resilience. It is imperative to consider tourism as a sector of activity that can promote the crossed fertilization of different sectors of economic activity, contributing to greater differentiation of the industrial vertical chains linked to endogenous resources, and to intelligent diversification of production based on horizontal specialization of economic activities where the Iberian Peninsula has comparative advantages, in terms of scale and cultural heritage. This involves policy-makers, scholars, and above all entrepreneurs, who are the drivers of change.

The present volume contains a collection of 15 chapters presenting diverse contributions on the importance of tourism entrepreneurship in the Iberian Peninsula, providing readers with an enriching journey through new trends in tourism and education directed towards tourism entrepreneurship and innovation. It reveals this ancient and multi-faceted territory as an international reference for entrepreneurship, investment, and experimentation in tourism.

After the foreword, in Chap. 2, Figueiredo, Soares, and Costa provide a thoughtful piece of research, categorizing the actors influencing the drivers of access to digital technology in the ecosystem of innovative tourism services. In addition, the influence of alternative factors or drivers is evaluated, with emphasis on situations where there is more than one driver, and more than one evaluator.

In Chap. 3, Machado, Vareiro, Sousa, and Mendes address rural tourism in an innovative way by making use of both physical and emotional experiences. The authors argue that the personalized encounter between places, people/culture, and guests, characteristic of rural accommodation and the village context, can play a central role in the quality of the tourist experience in these areas.

Chapter 4 contains a challenging journey guided by Rocha, Tarrés Falcó, and Leitão, arguing that spirituality and mindful tourism can enhance economic activities in rural towns and villages with no tourism tradition. The authors use a self-narrative method to describe the second author's experiences in mindful travel projects, courses, congresses, and ventures, and discuss mindful tourism, revealing innovative Hispanic cases, as well as providing guidelines for future investigations and innovative entrepreneurial projects in the Iberian Peninsula.

In Chap. 5, Braga and Silva explain the strategies used by the hosts or owners of manor houses to ensure the self-sustainability of Historic Housing Tourism. The research findings, based on conceptual hypotheses derived from the literature, point out that a substantial number of these houses can no longer depend economically on agriculture, since the primary sector has lost relevance in the local economy. Thus, a new logic of multi-functionality for rural areas is required, taking into consideration the value added through cultural and natural heritage.

Chapter 6, by Pereira, Fonseca, Sousa, and Correia, based on the case of the Iberian Euroregion of Galicia and Northern Portugal, analyses stakeholders' perceptions of cooperation as a strategy to enhance new dynamics for a common tourist destination. The authors analyse several alternative marketing strategies and actions, to enhance the region as a tourist destination.

In Chap. 7, Rengifo Gallego, Sánchez Martín, Sánchez Rivero, Martín Delgado, and Rodríguez Rangel present an original approach to the role played by social networks in promoting rural tourism destinations. The authors study rural accommodation in Extremadura, based on the hypothesis that Facebook promotes the visibility of its rural tourism establishments. A Grouping Analysis is applied both with and without spatial restriction, to determine the presence of spatial clusters. The main findings outline the need to incorporate Facebook actively as a basic tool for better performance derived from the positioning of accommodation.

Chapter 8, by Lopes, Leitão, and Rengifo Gallego, assesses to what extent local agri-food products serve as brands of their places of origin and local drivers of creative tourism. Four case studies are presented: Cereja do Fundão (Cherries of Fundão) and Queijo Serra da Estrela (Serra da Estrela cheese) from the Portuguese Central Region, and Cereza del Jerte (Cherries from Jerte) and Torta del Casar (Torta del Casar cheese) from Spanish Extremadura. The empirical findings reveal that the four agri-food products studied are catalysts for tourism activities and events in their places of origin. In addition, these same products are drivers of a range of creative tourism activities.

In Chap. 9, Almeida and Belezas present an interesting study following the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, positioning remote work and digital nomadism as new entrepreneurial opportunities that can be used by peripheral territories to attract an emerging target group called half-tourists. Two reference projects are assessed, namely Digital Nomads Madeira (Portugal) and Nomad City Gran Canaria (Spain). Through in-depth interviews with the people implementing these strategies, new insights arise concerning the barriers and best practices to innovate in tourism strategies in peripheral places.

Chapter 10, by Travanca, Vieira, and Félix, examines the impact of both internal (e.g. size, age, growth, and debt) and external factors (e.g. real GDP growth rate, sovereign debt crisis, and location) on the profitability of Portuguese tourism firms. Using a panel data analysis, applied to a sample of micro, small, and medium-sized firms, from 2009 to 2017, the empirical findings reveal that profitability is positively affected by firms' size and age and by real economic growth rates. Conversely, the firm's indebtedness ratio and the sovereign debt crisis denote a negative influence. Firms in the main tourism regions are generally more profitable, and relatively less affected by the sovereign debt crisis, which was particularly harmful to micro-firms.

In Chap. 11, Martínez-Puche, Amat, Cortes, Larrosa, Lorente, Ortiz, and Sáncho study a training programme devoted to Smart Tourism Development, illustrating the process, the content of the training programme, the topics and the methodology used, based on the experience of the University of Alicante, targeted to the development of this type of training programme linked to tourism, reinforcing the importance of an integrated rural and territorial approach, with the local population as a fundamental pillar. Technological aspects must be considered, to ensure that "smart rural spaces" are accessible, connectable, and participatory, in order to improve the tourist experience.

Chapter 12 presents a qualitative study by Silva, Silva, and Alves, who assessed the importance of events in promoting a tourist destination, identifying the themes of the events used for that promotion and the role of events in promoting a tourist destination. This study was conducted by local authorities in the north of Portugal that held entertainment, cultural, sports, and educational events. The main findings revealed that those events attracted plenty of visitors, had a good economic impact on the region, and contributed to increased consumption and greater dissemination of their products, facilitating potential new contacts for business and partnerships.

In Chap. 13, Banha, Graça, and Ganha provide an original contribution devoted to the still unexplored topic of tourism entrepreneurship education. The authors present a case study applied to the Tourism Creative Factory programme, in order to identify the methodologies used to foster and promote an entrepreneurial culture throughout the different regions of the country, but also to assess the part this programme played in attaining the strategic goals set by Portugal Tourism. The analysis of this case study may be able to shape the creation of future evidence-based policy-making around entrepreneurship education or encourage further research related to the history and evolution of tourism in Portugal.

Lastly, Chap. 14, by Estevão, Duarte, Cabral, Campón-Cerro, and Yuliati, assesses safety perception and service needs in the Covid-19 situation by exploring seven critical dimensions. The findings indicate differences between Spanish and Portuguese hotel guests in all categories, with special incidence in hygiene-related factors. The differences vary according to gender, and women seem to be more sensitive to safety as they present more differences than men. Level of education and having children also affect the perception of hotel safety and guests' requirements. The need to prove hygiene and having the hotel certificate for Covid-19 emerged as key factors in restoring the client's trust.

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