# **Determinants of Travellers'a Interest** in Creative Tourism



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**Abstract** Recently, a new type of tourism activity has come under the spotlight, namely, creative tourism. As a new concept, it is relatively unfamiliar to the academic and business environment; its particularity resides in the activities the tourists are involved in. In order to design a framework of practices specific to creative tourism, these activities have to actively engage the tourists in the habits and customs of the tourist destination, experiencing certain aspects of the natives' culture. Certainly, there are various practices similar to those described, some of them known as creative tourism, and others as experimental, adventure or cultural tourism. Due to this ambiguity, this paper implies both a theoretical and a statistical descriptive approach, aiming to highlight the distinctions of this particular form of tourism and the importance of exploiting it, due to its connection to the creative and cultural industries. A quantitative, survey-based approach was employed to determine those traits that could influence the tourists to engage in creative tourism's practices. The survey was applied in Romania, and it is designed to analyse the relationship between specific tourists' traits on one hand—age, level of education and income, residence, country of study, travel frequency, length of stay, accommodation type and interest in specific types of tourism, other than the creative one—and their involvement in activities specific to creative tourism, on the other hand.

**Keywords** Creative tourism · Cultural tourism · Tourism consumption · Survey

JEL Classification O15 · Z10 · Z31 · Z32

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#### 1 Introduction

In the last decades, a new touristic product is evolved from the cultural tourism, as the creative tourism. The creative tourism implies specialized consumption of creative and cultural industries' goods and services (Carvalho et al., 2019), the travellers' decision being determined by the entertainment offers with a high creative and cultural content. This type of tourism aims to meet specialized and experienced travellers' needs, who seek authentic and emotional stimulating experiences. As the creative tourism implies natural and manmade attractions but they are not mandatory for its development, this sector could flourish both in urban and also in rural areas, as the most important exploited resources are represented by human capital and intangible cultural heritage.

Our research focuses on Romania and it aims to determine the interest of Romanian travellers in experiences typical to creative tourism. In this regard, we surveyed 155 persons in order to investigate where and how they spend their vacations and how much interest they have in certain entertainment activities. Our research is relevant for policymakers, hospitality management and other academics concerned by creative tourism and cultural—creative industries.

This paper is structured in six sections: the second section of this paper frames the most important findings concerning the creative tourism; the third section provides the steps taken in conducting this research; the fourth section includes the survey's results and data analysis, followed by further discussion in the fifth section. Finally, the sixth section presents the conclusions.

#### 2 Literature Review

The novelty of the creative tourism concept determines us to briefly characterize it and emphasize its importance and advantages with the intention to make it more familiar. The increasing demand for authentic and more diverse experiences caused the emergence of a new type of tourism, the creative tourism. Greg Richards is the first and the most noticeable promoter of this concept, and he describes it as a type of tourism providing the visitors with "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" (Richards & Raymond, 2000). In other words, the creative tourism is an active type of leisure tourism, a combination of cultural and experience types of tourism (Pintea & Badulescu, 2020). The creative tourism stands out as a niche of the cultural tourism (McKercher et al., 2005; Al-Ababneh & Masadeh, 2019; Richards in Palenčíková & Csapó, 2021) differencing itself from the latter by the activities implied; these activities provide uniqueness and authenticity of the travel experience, the travellers are rather performing habits, customs and activities specific to the native population of the visited destination, as Palenčíková and Csapó stated "cultural tourism mostly focuses on passive knowledge

of cultural and historical heritage, creative tourism involves greater interaction and involvement of the visitor in achieving an authentic experience based on the visitor's emotional and social connection with the destination, its culture and local community" (2021). As mentioned before, this new offer meets the more sophisticated travellers' needs and also brings something new on the tourism market in order to raise the competitiveness of those areas that practice and promote it (Richards, 2020). The tourists who prefer this type of tourism have a high level of travel experience, income and education (Richards, 2020; Sigala & Leslie, 2005). The "new ingredient" used in the creative tourism recipe is represented by the creative and cultural industries. The creative tourism is linked to the creative economy through entertainment activities, these being linked to the local/national culture and performed as creative activities, implying the exploitation of the cultural and creative industries and the labour of the creative class.

The creative economy propels economic development in the area where the creative and cultural industries flourish (Florida, 2005; Harvey et al., 2012; Skavronska, 2017; Boal & Herrero, 2018; Tajtáková & Olejárová, 2021; Cerisola & Panzera, 2021); both urban and rural developments were linked to the presence of creative economy and cultural tourism (Fridgen in Sigala & Leslie, 2005; Oakley, 2006; Rogerson, 2010; Richards, 2011; Miles in Drummond, 2021). The economic development generated by the connection between the creative and cultural industries on one hand, and the tourism, on the other hand, is confirmed in numerous cases, such as in Canada where tourism was enhanced by investing and developing various facilities specific to creative and cultural industries (Stolarick et al., 2010), in Sweden where the village Jokkmokk developed as a tourism destination based on its cultural history as settled by the Sami people (Brouder in Drummond, 2021). However, even if Drummond (2021) agrees that this connection had a positive impact in the developed countries, the author cannot see the possibility of the same results in South Africa due to apartheid, poverty, inequalities, low skills and education level. The explanation of her argument relies upon the features of the creative class, the persons needed to work in creative and cultural industries, described as talented, possessors of high skills and highly educated (Barringer et al., 2004; Florida, 2014; Londar et al., 2020; Sava & Badulescu, 2017).

The economic growth and development is desired to be met rather through high value-added activities, such as services, tourism services (Pine & Gilmore, 2011), more exactly creative tourism, a practice that encompasses a great value given by the human resource and his performance. An example of creative tourism practices is found in Japan, where many Japanese women visit a rural area near the Lake Suwa in order to learn traditional silk weaving (Creighton in Drummond, 2021); in France, where the skills of the chocolatiers were exposed in tastings and demonstrations (Terrio in Drummond, 2021); in the Italian old town Favara where The Farm Cultural Park brought back the vitality of the area (Culture Action Europe, online); in Portugal, where the city of Obidos is famous for its development as a creative city and for enhancing its tourism through the creative and cultural industries (Musikyan, 2016); practices typical to the creative tourism could be found also in Romania, in

Maramures, where travellers can experience the local culture by visiting both natural and manmade attractions and also, by crafting pottery (Visit Ṭara Oașului, online).

The knowledge in this field is scarce even if the subject is researched since 2005 as Palenčíková and Csapó (2021) show in their study regarding the creative tourism in Slovakia, another relevant work for our research as it includes also a survey-based analysis of the demand for creative tourism products. The interest for the creative tourism is high due to the given possibilities to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on tourism, culture and creative industries.

## 3 Methodology

In order to conduct this research, we provided first of all, a theoretical foundation concerning the creative tourism concept and features, followed by an empirical investigation consisting in a qualitative analysis of primary data gathered surveying 155 respondents from Romania during June 2021. The questionnaire used 31 closed questions designed to analyse the demand's behavior and motivation, and it was structured in three parts: description of sample; travellers' profile as tourism consumers; openness and interest in creative tourism. The data collected were analysed through direct observation of the tourist behavior and preferences correlated to the interest in creative tourism's practices.

# 4 Travellers' Openness and Interest in Creative Tourism

# 4.1 Description of Sample

There were 155 persons surveyed and the general information regarding the sample, as age, gender, residence, place of studies, education and income level, is presented in Table 1.

As we notice, the majority of respondents are between 25 and 35 years old, females, living in the urban area, they had studied in their home country and they possess a Master degree. Considering their level of education, 78% of the sample had graduated higher education, whereas the income level is average, most of the respondents (27.7%) earning between 2,501 and 3,500 lei (508–711 euro) and 74.9% of the sample earning a monthly net income over 2,500 lei (508 euro); the amount of 2,500 lei/month represents an average level of income in Romania, the minim wage in Romania being in net values, 1,386 lei (288 euro). In other words, almost half of the sample (47.2%) earns high average to high incomes (>3,501 lei/711 euro), this aspect being consistent with the respondents' level of education.

Table 1 Description of sample			
Age	%	Education level	%
<18	1.9	High school	19.4
18–24	23.9	Postsecondary school	1.9
25–35	45.2	Vocational school	0.7
36–49	18.7	Bachelor	27.7
50–65	9	Master	40.6
>65	1.3	Doctoral/Postdoc	9.7
Gender	%	Income level	%
Females	77.4	<1,400 (285 euro)	16.1%
Males	22.6	1,401–2,500 lei (285–508 euro)	9.0%
Residence	%	2,501–3,500 lei (508–711 euro)	27.7%
Rural	19.3	3,501–4,500 lei (711–915 euro)	16.8%
Urban	71	4,501–5,500 lei (915–1118 euro)	8.4%
Metropolitan area	9.7	5,501–6,000 lei (1118–1220 euro)	7.1%
Place of studies	%	6,001–7,000 lei (1220–1423 euro)	5.2%
Home country	81.9	>7,000 lei (1423 euro)	9.7%
Abroad/home country + abroad	18.1		

**Table 1** Description of sample

Source: Survey

## 4.2 Travellers' Profile as Tourism Consumers

The sample's description from the tourism consumption's point of view is presented below in Table 2, where the respondents' travel frequency, vacation length, transport means, accommodation and booking preferences are listed.

More than half of the respondents use to travel 1-2 times/year and 43.2% travel even more often. The vacation length options are more equally distributed; the option of 1-3 nights is the most popular (35.5%), being followed by the preference for a longer voyage—the 6-7 nights' option (30.3%). When it comes to travel arrangements, 69.7% of the respondents prefer to travel by personal car, to stay in hotels (54.8%) and pensions (27.1%) and to book their holiday both in advance (51.6%) and spontaneously, shortly before as last minute vacations (48.4%).

# 4.3 Openness and Interest in Creative Tourism

Even if the concept of creative tourism is not so well known, or even if the travellers don't realize or think about the type of tourism they practice when they travel, their choices can talk for themselves. Table 3 presents a strong preference for seaside, mountains and city—breaks. The pilgrimage tourism doesn't arouse the interest of

Table 2	Tourist	profile
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Travel frequency	%	Vacation length	%
1–2 times/year	54.2	1–3 nights	35.5
3–4 times/year	28.4	4–5 nights	26.5
>5 times/year	14.8	6–7 nights	30.3
I don't travel	2.6	>8 nights	7.7
Transport means	%	Accommodation	%
Personal car	69.7	Hotel	54.8
Train	3.2	Pension	27.1
Coach	4.5	Hostel	0.65
Airplane	22.6	Rented apartment/house	15.5
Booking preferences	%	Guest house	0.65
In advance	48.4	Tent	1.3
Shortly before	51.6		

Source: Survey

 Table 3
 Destination preferences of travellers

Current number	Destination preferences	Very much (5) (%)	Moderately (4) (%)	Indifferent (3) (%)	Slightly (2) (%)	Not at all (1) (%)
1	Seaside	61.9	17.4	10.3	4.5	5.8
2	Mountain	56.8	17.4	18.7	5.2	1.9
3	City—break	42.6	25.2	2	6.5	5.8
4	Pilgrimage	10.3	11.6	24.5	21.3	32.3
5	Thematic camp	11.6	14.2	29	22.6	22.6

Source Survey

a great share of the sample (32.3%), although the answers vary a lot due to diverse reasons: confession, pilgrimage popularity, etc. Considering the option of thematic camp, there are also various answers, but the trend is negative for the analysed sample, there being only a few persons very attracted to this type of tourism.

As the options for tourist destinations are unlimited, in addition, we analysed specific decision factors considered as interest triggers for creative and cultural tourism. Table 4 presents 10 such decision factors, except the factors: local dialect/official language (3), destination's popularity (7) and natural attractions (10)—the tendency towards these shows a typical type of tourism consumption, all these three manifesting a moderate and strong influence, the natural resources being the essential determinants manifesting a very strong influence. The other factors could be divided into three categories:

 Table 4
 Decision factors in choosing the tourist destination

Current number	Decision factor	Very much (5) (%)	Moderately (4) (%)	Indifferent (3) (%)	Slightly (2) (%)	Not at all (1) (%)
1	Local cuisine	29.7	29	20.6	11	9.7
2	Local/traditional dance and music	29.7	21.9	27.7	13.5	7.1
3	Local/national customs and habits	35.5	29	24.5	8.4	2.6
4	Local dialect/official language	25.8	22.6	29	12.9	9.7
5	Cultural differences	15.5	20.6	27.7	12.3	23.9
6	Possibility of learning the official language/local dialects	9.7	9.7	27.1	20	33.5
7	Possibility of learning local habits and customs	11.6	12.3	29	21.9	25.2
8	Destination's popularity	21.9	23.9	31.6	14.8	7.7
9	Possibility to access cultural events	11.6	21.3	31	18.7	17.4
10	Possibility to access different local activities (parties, competitions, local habits and customs)	21.3	21.9	29.7	17.4	9.7
11	Natural attractions	68.4	16.1	10.3	3.2	1.9
12	Manmade attractions	24.5	31	25.8	9	9.7

Source Survey

- Trigger factors for creative tourism: Possibility of learning the official language/local dialects (6), possibility of learning local habits and customs (7);
- Trigger factors both for creative and cultural tourism: local/traditional dance and music (2), local/national customs and habits (3), cultural differences (5), possibility to access cultural events (9), possibility to access different local activities (parties, competitions, local habits and customs) (10);
- Trigger factors for cultural tourism: local cuisine (1), manmade attractions (12).

If we look to the first decision factors, the triggers of the creative tourism—the possibility of learning the official language/local dialects (6) doesn't influence the travellers' decisions and almost the same is valid for the possibility of learning local habits and customs (7), but in this case, the factor enjoys a slightly greater importance.

Further on, analysing the decision factors considered triggers for both the creative and cultural tourism, the situation changes; the local/traditional dance and music (2), and the local/national customs and habits (3) are almost equally important when choosing the tourism destination, impacting strongly and positively the travellers' choice. The cultural differences (4) manifest a balanced influence, but the tendency is not to represent an obstacle, nor an attraction in itself, in the vacation planning process. The possibility to access cultural events (9) and the possibility to access different local activities (parties, competitions, local habits and customs) (10) don't enjoy a strong importance, their influence being rather indifferent and moderate.

The last decision factors, the local cuisine (1) and the manmade attractions (12), considered triggers for practicing the cultural tourism, manifest a rather positive strong influence in determining the travellers' options.

Analysing the importance of these factors when choosing the tourism destination, we observe the inclination towards the cultural tourism triggers and those combining the triggers of cultural and creative tourism. However, exhaustively the most important decision factors are those specific to typical tourism consumption, then those specific to cultural tourism and the least important are the factors triggering the creative tourism. Even if the respondents use to travel, we have to correlate these preferences with the frequency of traveling (54.2% travel only 1–2/year), explaining so the low interest for active leisure practices and the fact that the majority of respondents are perhaps frequent first-time travellers and not so experienced.

The idea of first-time travellers is confirmed by the chosen options regarding the activities the tourists are involved in during their holiday; the respondents had the possibility to choose multiple options - their choices were not limited only to a single entertainment activity - so we can see that the respondents opted for:

- Sightseeing: 72.3%;
- Relaxing at the beach/spa/hotel: 68.4%;
- Relaxing actively (practicing sports specific to the tourist destination): 29%;
- Attending cultural events: 18.1%;
- Meeting new people: 14.2%.

Also, their behavior specific to a tourist who travels once or twice a year, escaping from reality and recharging his batteries, is confirmed by the strong preferences for

sightseeing and relaxing at the beach/spa/hotel. However, based on the respondents' answers to the question "When you travel, how often do you get involved in the activities you attend (shows, artistic performances that also involve spectators, etc.)?", the openness towards active involvement in the holiday's activities is confirmed as 15.5% of the respondents admitted they always involve in this kind of activities because they enjoy trying new things, 25.2% are often involved, 38% are seldom involved, 12.3% didn't know what to answer and only 9% of the respondents never involve because they feel themselves uncomfortable or they don't enjoy doing so.

Contradictory to their answers regarding the decision factors in planning the holiday, 41.7% of the respondents are often engaged in entertainment activities or they are eager to try new experiences, probably not so much those listed as learning activities. Generally, travellers often get involved spontaneously in various experiences, so we could explain the results of the survey as the respondents enjoy the active involvement, but it doesn't have to be planned ahead, nor written down on the to-do list; as many respondents travel just once or twice a year, we assume that planning to learn new skills in the annual holiday triggers stress, shortening the time left for sightseeing, visiting or for the lazy days of the vacation.

## 5 Discussion

Our survey provides information regarding a sample from Romania, females of 25–35 years old, master study graduates without experience of studying abroad, living in urban areas and earning a monthly net income of 2501—4500 lei (508–918 euro). The respondents are well educated and have a high level of living considering their income level and residency area. These features are also noticeable in their tourism consumption, they travel on a regular basis once—twice a year or even more often for 43.2% of the respondents. They prefer to travel using their personal car, to book hotel or pension rooms, to book the holiday both in advance or shortly before, but when it comes to the length of the stay it varies a lot, the respondents being fans both of the shorter and longer vacations.

Analysing their tourist destination preferences, there is a tendency towards the traditional forms of tourism: seaside, mountain and city—break tourism. The respondents are not interested in the pilgrimage tourism, but they show a slightly interest in thematic camps (adventure, experience and creative tourism). Their vacation agenda is filled mostly with activities such as sightseeing and visiting tourist attractions, and relaxing at the beach/spa/hotel. Few of them spend their vacation also relaxing actively and attending cultural events, although their answers suggest that 37.5% of them enjoy being involved in various activities and to have new experiences.

Regarding the factors influencing their destination's decision, the respondents are very receptive, in this specific order, to the natural resources, local/national customs and habits, local/traditional dance and music, local cuisine, local dialect/official language, manmade attractions, destination's popularity, possibility to access different local activities (parties, competitions, local habits and customs), cultural

differences, possibility of learning local habits and customs, possibility to access cultural events and lastly, to the possibility of learning the official language/local dialects. More precisely, they pay more attention to the traditional factors in choosing a tourism destination and also to the cultural ones; the creative factors are not reflected as essentials on their options' list. Even so, their answers regarding the entertainment options and their active involvement in this kind of activities reflect a rather great openness and interest in spending their holiday trying new experiences. However, the active leisure has to be included and not to be their holiday's aim, most of them preferring sightseeing and relaxing at the beach/spa/hotel and just additionally to take part actively in various activities—this fact being a proof that the respondents are rather incidental than intentional creative tourism consumers.

### 6 Conclusion

In the last 20 years, a new type of tourism has emerged within the cultural tourism—more actively involving, authentic experiences—oriented and culture-based type—known as creative tourism. We frame as creative tourism's practices those activities requiring the travellers' curiosity and interest for the tourism destination's culture. The creative tourism places the traveller in a central role and it gets him familiarised with the destination's customs and habits involving him actively in the experiences meant to teach him new skills specific to the local or national culture. The creative tourism's offer attracts more experienced travellers and seekers of cultural knowledge and authentic experiences.

Our survey-based research presented the tourism preferences and interest for creative tourism of a sample consisting of 155 Romanian respondents. The majority of the respondents are represented by women, aged between 25 and 35 years, master graduates, earning net incomes higher than 2,501 lei/month (508 euro/month) and living in urban areas. Considering their traveller profile, they travel for 1–2 times/year, for both short (1–3 nights) and long (6–7 nights) periods, using their personal car and booking hotels or pension rooms. The holiday planning preferences are almost equally distributed, 51.6% of the respondents are booking in advance and the others 48.4% are booking shortly before the voyage. As the majority of the respondents travel only 1-2 times/year, they prefer seaside, mountain or city—break types of tourism and most of the entertainment activities they get involved in include sightseeing and relaxing at the beach/spa/hotel. However, the answers targeting to assess their openness towards active involvement show a high interest and availability. When deciding their holiday destination, the most important decision factors were related to the natural attractions, culture and finally, to those combining the triggers for cultural and creative tourism.

However, considering the analysed sample and the creative tourism's popularity, we think the travellers should be familiarised with these practices by developing and including them in the tourism offer of lesser—visited destinations (such as cheaper and not so crowded seaside/mountain resorts or with other natural attractions) or by

including activities such as short trips to the seaside or mountains, or by offering accommodation with spa and pool amenities. This type of travellers needs to visit new places, to relax both actively and passively, and only after satisfying these needs, their curiosity and availability can be triggered in order to learn, try new experiences and create authentic memories.

The creative tourism does not target only foreign travellers or of different cultures; it has the ability to raise interest also in the domestic travellers, interested in discovering their roots, practicing old habits and customs of their country. This aspect appears to be crucial in the times of COVID-19 pandemic as in the last year the travellers had to face numerous travel restrictions and also the tourism sector has faced important losses. Another advantage of promoting the creative tourism consists in reducing the seasonality of various destinations dependent on climate and natural resources, as their offer could be diversified with creative tourism practices. On the other hand, the creative tourism generates revenues, creates jobs, supports culture and spreads knowledge, providing education and training both for the tourists and the suppliers, as well.

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