

Chapter 88

Creative Tourism and Cultural Heritage: A New Perspective¹

Enrico Bonetti

Second University of Naples, Italy

Michele Simoni

University of Naples “Parthenope,” Italy

Raffaele Cercola

Second University of Naples, Italy

ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses how cultural heritage destinations should evolve to keep pace with changes in the demand for cultural tourism. The empirical evidence shows that the most important heritage destinations suffer from a misalignment of their value propositions with respect to the new needs of cultural tourists. These types of gaps can be filled only by understanding the features and evolution of these needs and by identifying sustainable strategic paths to enrich the typical offering of these heritage destinations. This chapter proposes a theoretical framework that combines the most relevant trends in cultural tourism from a demand and an offering perspective. The Pompeii case is subsequently analyzed through the lens of the proposed theoretical framework.

INTRODUCTION

Within cultural tourism, heritage tourism has long played a relevant role in Europe with historical, archeological and architectural heritage sites attracting millions of people from all over the world. Nevertheless, these heritage sites are suffering for a lack of innovation because their value proposition has not been evolving consistently with

the changing needs of cultural tourism demand. Whereas these needs are becoming increasingly oriented toward a deeper experience and the more active participation of tourists in the destination's cultural activities, heritage sites mostly continue to offer a passive tourism experience. To elucidate this phenomenon, this study provides an in-depth analysis of the new tendencies in cultural tourism demand and identifies the most relevant strategic

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paths that tourism destinations can use to improve their offering and align it to tourists' new needs.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first part has a theoretical nature and proposes a framework that combines the current trends in cultural tourism demand with the most notable changes in cultural tourism offerings. Based on this framework, in the second part, the case of the Pompeii archeological site is described as a paradigmatic example of the necessity for a cultural heritage destination to evolve into a cultural creative destination. In addition, several proposals for the enhancement of the Pompeii value proposition are suggested.

1. CULTURAL TOURISM FROM THE DEMAND PERSPECTIVE

Because, both in literature and in practice, the term "cultural tourism" does not have a unique meaning, it is worth clarifying the sense in which it is meant here.

In the following paragraph then, first of all, the various possible definitions of cultural tourism are examined and, subsequently, one of these definitions is assumed as a reference point for the analysis conducted in the remainder of the chapter.

What is "cultural tourism?" is an apparently simple question; however, it is not easy to answer. In fact, there are many definitions of both "cultural tourism" and "cultural tourists" that have been adopted in the context of several studies and research concerning this issue. The question, of course, is not just semantic, and it is undoubtedly more complex because the lack of a clear definition makes it difficult to understand the specific object of the different analyses and to compare the different data on cultural tourism. For this reason, it is first necessary to choose the definition of cultural tourism that is best suited to the purposes of the present analysis.

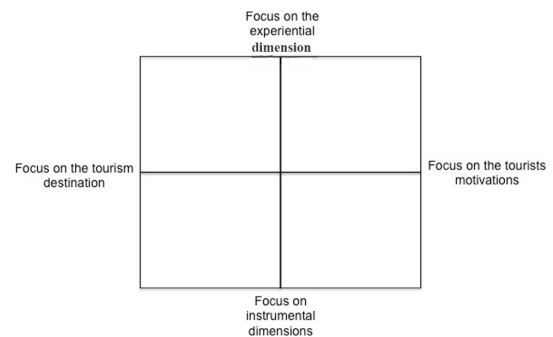
The definitions of cultural tourism can be classified into four types of definitions: definitions that emphasize the destination's resources, definitions that emphasize the motivational aspects of the tourists, definitions that focus on the experiential or aspirational dimensions and definitions that are instrumental to the specific purposes of studies. Each of these types of definition adopts a different perspective in addressing the phenomenon, as summarized in Figure 1.

On the vertical axis, the definitions of cultural tourism that rely on the experiential/aspirational dimensions are opposed to the definitions that are instrumental. The definitions that rely on the experiential/aspirational dimensions focus on the nature of the experience of cultural tourism in conceptual terms. In contrast, the instrumental definitions are used to identify who the cultural tourists are and to measure the size or range of the phenomenon of cultural tourism. Therefore, moving from top to the bottom of the vertical axis, the definitions proceed from those that are more comprehensive and strategic to those that are more operational and directly related to a specific purpose.

On the horizontal axis, at one extreme, are the definitions derived from tourism disciplines that analyze cultural tourism through the lens of the

Figure 1. The dimensions to classify the definitions of cultural tourism

Source: adapted from McKercher & Du Cros (2002)



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