

Chapter 34

Innovation in Tourism Service Development in Budapest: The Creative Synergy of Literature and Gastronomy

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ABSTRACT

Both food tourism and literary tourism are increasingly popular products in the global market, but there is relatively limited collaboration between the two areas. In addition to providing an overview of the role of creativity and innovation in tourism development, with special emphasis on gastronomic tourism and literary tourism, the paper presents a unique hospitality concept that fuses gastronomy with literature, demonstrating the use of creativity in successful tourism product development. The research is based on qualitative methods: interviews with the business owners were used to explore the innovation process and the factors affecting the company's operations, and content analysis of customers' reviews on social media sites and the restaurant's media coverage were used to evaluate the role of creativity in the restaurant's success.

INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to investigate the potential synergy of gastronomy and literature in tourism product development, placing the issue in the context of creativity and innovation in tourism. The study area, Budapest has undergone significant changes in recent years in terms of tourism development, its restaurant scene has experienced a minor revolution, and the core topic of this paper – the analysis of the evolution of KönyvBár, a unique hospitality concept – illustrates well many of these changes.

Budapest has always played a dominant role in the tourism of Hungary: approximately 60% of the country's international guest nights are registered in the city, and about 70% of its international tourism revenue is generated in Budapest (HCSO, 2016). Due to its capital city status, Budapest is often con-

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sidered the cultural gateway to the country: it is the only truly cosmopolitan metropolis in Hungary, in terms of population, area size, and the supply of cultural programs (Smith & Puczkó, 2012). It is generally the first, and often the only, destination visited by the majority of international tourists (Puczkó, Rátz, & Smith, 2008).

For many years after the collapse of the socialist system in 1989-1990, Budapest struggled with similar problems like other Central-Eastern-European countries: after almost five decades of suppressed national identity, there was an obvious desire to re-assert individuality and distinction. However, at the same time, achieving the same level of quality of life as the one enjoyed in Western Europe, especially in terms of material possessions and consumption, was seen as an equally important objective of economic and social development. This parallel goal of being acknowledged as both unique and alike created challenges in many areas, including the development of tourist products and services, and destination image formation and positioning (Rátz, Smith, & Michalkó, 2008). Tourism development in this period was based mainly on the city's cultural and health resources as well as its fast developing business sector, leading to progress in the fields of cultural, spa and health, and MICE tourism. However, in recent years, a gradual shift towards more contemporary and experiential forms of tourism has been experienced; and although this trend is in evidence in a large number of other cities throughout the world (Smith, 2007; Maitland & Ritchie, 2009), the combination of creativity and certain local factors – such as the availability of neglected architectural resources and a contemporary art and party scene – has resulted in the development of distinctive attractions. The so-called “ruin pubs” or “ruin bars” in the historic center of Budapest, as a consequence of the hospitality-driven regeneration of the area's decaying physical and social fabric, have emerged as a unique component of the city's tourist offer, with various forms of cultural production being included in the venues' hospitality propositions (Lugosi, Bell, & Lugosi, 2010). Similarly to its major competitors, Vienna and Prague (Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2014), tourism in Budapest is highly concentrated in so-called urban tourism precincts, i.e. in the UNESCO World Heritage-listed historical parts of the city and its buffer zone including the old Jewish district. This latter area is characterized by an increasing number of creative entrepreneurs and initiatives: according to Zátori and Smith (2014), the district attracts people who are looking for innovative opportunities, creative expression and self-fulfillment. For many business owners who have decided to invest in this space, locational decisions were significantly influenced by the concentration of talent, the aesthetics and cultural meaning of the locality, the area's prestige, centrality and popularity, as well as the affordable rental prices and the networked nature of the district that facilitates co-operation among partners (Tóth, Keszei, & Dúll, 2014). KönyvBár is located in this area, but just on the edge of the ruin-pub scene, thus enjoying favorable accessibility and visibility, while being able to differentiate its offer from that of the more party-oriented establishments.

BACKGROUND

Creativity and Innovation in Tourism

Due to the intensifying competition in the tourism industry on a global level, creativity has become increasingly important in urban destinations in recent years (Richards, 2014). This search for competitive advantages based on creative strategies is not limited to the destination level: many tourist businesses also aim to distinguish their offer by developing unique, creative products and experiences. Creativity

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