Analysis of Creativity in Tourist Destinations, Based on Case Studies

Margarita Guadalupe Zazueta-Hernández[1] , Ana Laura Herrera-Prado[2]*

[1] Facultad de Arquitectura, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, Culiacán 80040, Mexico
[2] Unidad Regional Mazatlán, Universidad Autónoma de Occidente, Mazatlán 82100, Mexico

Corresponding Author Email: ana.herrera@uadeo.mx

ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the implementation of creativity in tourist destinations. A theoretical review and content analysis of creative tourism case studies were conducted, focusing on thematic descriptors such as resources allocated for creative tourism, creative products, demand, actions, and implementation strategies. The results highlight the main elements and various forms that creative tourism can take, ranging from interactive workshops and learning experiences to creative environments for tourism activities. Creative tourism emphasizes the preservation of natural resources, the conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and the involvement of the local population in creating authentic and creative tourist experiences.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, tourism has shown a strong connection with culture, which has become one of the primary drivers of tourism growth. This relationship diversifies offerings, stimulates demand, enhances the destination's image, and boosts its competitiveness [1]. In other words, culture encompasses both tangible and intangible resources that form a compelling tourist offering. These resources engage visitors with the host culture and foster new forms of socialization.

The integration of culture and tourism in production and consumption processes has shaped cultural tourism by the end of the 20th century, notable for its rapid growth across various countries and regions worldwide [2]. Subsequently, this tourism segment has experienced significant transformations, including increased demand, diversified consumption, and the rise of the experience economy. As a result, a new generation of tourism has emerged, characterized by a novel approach to travel.

From this perspective, creative tourism is viewed as a subset of cultural tourism, recognizing creativity as a strategic factor for sector development. It emphasizes generating tourist experiences in creative fields through the interaction of tourists with the destination, its local population, and culture. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [3] identifies seven areas where creative tourism flourishes: 1) media arts, 2) crafts and folk arts, 3) film, 4) design, 5) gastronomy, 6) literature, and 7) music.

Therefore, this article explores creativity in tourist destinations with the aim of identifying and analyzing the elements that influence the implementation of creativity. It seeks to create an optimal creative environment for the interaction of tourists with the local culture and population.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Creative tourism

The concept of creative tourism has been proposed by various authors, who have attributed specific characteristics to it. These characteristics are based on the implementation of creativity and the active participation of tourists alongside the local population in the activities conducted during the trip.

According to Richards and Raymond [4], creative tourism is a type of tourism "that offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences unique to the tourist destination".

In the words of UNESCO [5], "creative tourism is a journey aimed at providing an engaged and authentic experience. It involves participatory learning in the arts, heritage, or unique characteristics of a place, fostering a connection with the local residents who contribute to this living culture".

In this context, Serrano-Leyva et al. [6] state that activities related to this type of tourism enable tourists to learn about the local culture, traditions, and qualities that distinguish the community as unique and special.

Since creative tourism stems from a trend that aims to engage with and respect the place, its population, and culture, it also fosters the possibility of creating empathy between tourists and the environment [7]. Simultaneously, this approach facilitates the development of new narratives, meanings, and identities in tourist destinations [8], grounded in meaningful experiences for both tourists and hosts.

In this way, it is evident that creative tourism views creativity as a strategic factor for destination development. It aims to facilitate learning and experiences through unique activities and interactions between tourists and the place, its

population, and culture. Its scope focuses on creating attractive places for residents to live and work, as well as for tourists to visit, learn, and enjoy.

2.2 Creative Cities Network

UNESCO established the Creative Cities Network in 2004, recognizing cities that integrate creativity into their strategies and the design of innovative products to foster cooperation among cities that embrace creativity as a development factor.

The Creative Cities Network includes 354 designations across the seven established creative fields [3], (see Table 1). It comprises both urban centers and rural communities, all offering authentic culture and opportunities to experience everyday activities, as well as natural and cultural landscapes.

Table 1. Creative cities concentrated by creative field

Creative Field	Number of Cities
Crafts and Folk Art	66
Design	51
Film	26
Gastronomy	57
Literature	53
Media Arts	26
Music	75

Source: Adapted from UNESCO [3].

The highest number of designations are awarded for contributions to music, with 75 cities recognized, while the fields with the lowest frequency are film and media arts, with 26 cities each. However, all designated cities face a series of opportunities and challenges in participating in creative tourism, which involves greater interaction between tourists, the place, and the hosts.

2.3 Creativity in tourism

Creativity is a key element in the development of the knowledge economy and creative tourism. The OECD [1] highlights that creativity and culture support economic growth, link creative industries to tourism, promote demand, and enhance the destination's image. However, cities face the challenge of leveraging their creative attributes responsibly and in alignment with their values and identity.

Landry [9] states that the potential for creativity is determined by the context, physical environment, history, culture, and customs of each place, particularly through the participation of social actors in various activities and industries. These factors provide the necessary elements to implement creativity and encourage inhabitants and visitors to think, plan, create, and learn.

García Suárez and Pulido Fernández [10] argue that creativity has become a strategic tool for enhancing tourism competitiveness by leveraging competitive advantages innovatively. Serrano-Leyva et al. [6] note that creative tourism is distinct from mass tourism, focusing on personalized itineraries and experiences.

This scenario creates a symbiosis between tourism and creativity strategies, generating a "creative atmosphere." It also underscores the need to design contexts that preserve the attributes characterizing a place as creative, integrating knowledge that emphasizes interaction and place in designing

creative experiences and environments [11]. Thus, the symbolic value generated by creativity benefits tourism, and the creative economy gains from increased tourism activity.

The relationship between tourism and creativity suggests several ways to enhance tourism products and experience in visited destinations. Richards [2] proposes various types of creative experiences in tourism (see Table 2).

Table 2. Types of creative tourism experiences

Experience	Delivery
Learning	Workshops
Tasting	Experiences
	Open ateliers
Seeing	Itineraries
Buying	Shop window

Source: Richards [2], (p.12).

This diversity of experiences can be offered in various ways and environments, including through networks or itineraries. Examples include art workshops, craft creation, traditional gastronomy, tours, events, and festivals, among many others.

Furthermore, the OECD [1] states that developing creative tourism involves a variety of actions by regional tourism authorities, administrators, and destination promoters. It requires linking the tourism sector with creative industries to capitalize on growth opportunities and generate value for both tourism and creativity.

In summary, creative tourism is not limited to introducing new attractions but encompasses creating authentic and meaningful experiences that engage visitors. It also contributes to the sustainable development of the destination through collaboration with the local population. The goal is to leverage competitive advantages through creativity and add value by developing creative content and practices, thereby supporting innovation and enhancing competitiveness and sustainability.

3. METHOD

This research is exploratory-descriptive in nature and was conducted through a theoretical review and content analysis of creative tourism case studies. These cases were selected based on titles, keywords, and abstracts from open-access publications. The search was carried out in the following databases: Scopus, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate, using the thematic descriptors: "turismo creativo" or "creative tourism", "ciudad creativa" or "creative city" and "caso de estudio" or "case study". Ten articles were initially found during the first exploration. Subsequently, the final selection was made based on content analysis using the following criteria: type of research, creativity in tourism, creative products, and actions or plans for implementing creativity in the destination. As a result, four case studies met these criteria and were included in the final selection.

After making this selection, the study was based on a detailed content analysis of the four cases, focusing on the following thematic descriptors: i) region or tourist destination, ii) resources for creative tourism, iii) creative products, iv) demand, and v) actions and implementation strategies. The cases analyzed in this investigation are specified in Table 3.

Table 3. List of case studies analyzed

Case	Study Area	Author	Year
1	Cantabria, España	Mazarrasa, K.	2016
2	Barrio Matadero-Franklin, Chile	Pareti y García-Henche	2020
3	España	Pulido-Fernández *et al.*	2021
4	Argentina	Mansilla, M.	2021

Source: Own elaboration.

4. RESULTS Y DISCUSSION

4.1 Resources allocated for creative tourism

Cultural and natural heritage are the primary resources for creative tourism in the analyzed cases, as they attract visitors with their unique, dynamic, and vibrant characteristics.

Various aspects and elements of the destination (see Table 4) pique tourists' interest and draw a greater flow of visitors. These include the environments, gastronomy, rituals and traditions, ceremonies, festivals, performing arts, and knowledge and practices related to the region's nature and culture.

Table 4. Resources for creative tourism

Case	Destination	Resources
1	Cantabria, España	Natural resources
		Cultural and natural landscapes
		Tangible and intangible cultural heritage
		Gastronomy
2	Barrio Matadero-Franklin, Santiago de Chile	Historic district
		Urban and cultural landscape
		Urban art circuit
3	Spanish cities	Tangible and intangible cultural heritage
		Contemporary environments
		Festivals, fairs and cultural events
		Historic and innovative buildings
4	Argentine cities	Natural resources
		Gastronomy
		Festivals, fairs and cultural events

Source: Own elaboration.

It is observed that the diverse landscapes of each destination and the variety of environments created are incorporated into tourist resources as key elements to attract visitors through creative and innovative tourist products.

This dynamic aligns with the views of Serrano-Leyva et al. [6] who assert that creative tourism fosters an appreciation of local culture and traditions, as well as the empathy generated between tourists and the unique environment of the place, as mentioned by Korstanje [7].

4.2 Creative products

In the analyzed case studies, the main tourist products that constitute the creative offer were identified. Their inclusion represents a new way for tourists to engage with and experience destinations, enriching their overall experience. These products also provide innovative opportunities for both the host community and the tourism sector by incorporating the destination's artistic, cultural, and participatory elements.

Creative products are listed in Table 5, highlighting the diverse cultural and natural landscapes of the province of Cantabria [12]; the Biennial of Architecture and Urbanism in Chile, accompanied by a schedule of activities related to culture and art [13]; cities with their architecture and urbanism, culture, tangible and intangible heritage, creative environments and institutions, museums, galleries, and churches [14]; and gastronomy, along with the promotion of festivals, fairs, workshops, courses, exhibitions, and cultural events [15], held throughout different seasons of the year.

Table 5. List of creative products offered by each case study

Case	Creative Products
1	1) Landscapes, cultural and natural heritage, 2) Horse riding, cycling or walking routes, 3) Tree plantations, beach clean-ups and regeneration programs, 4) Gastronomy: cooking workshops, cheese, butter and sobaos making, 5) Tasting in typical restaurants, 6) Hotel and winery, 7) Art: routes to learn about rural architecture, watercolor and photography courses, music collaboration with traditional instruments, 8) 17th century artillery factory, baroque mansions and palaces, churches, museums, 9) Santoña Marshes Natural Park, Oyambre Natural Park.
2	1) 2019 Architecture and Urbanism Biennial, 2) Heritage buildings: Huemul Theater, Franklin-Galpón Matadero, Bullring, La Curtiembre, 3) Art galleries, 4) Vintage objects trade, 5) Urban and cultural landscape, 6) Urban art circuit, murals.
3	1) Tangible and intangible cultural heritage, 2) museums, churches, buildings with historical value, 3) innovative buildings, 4) contemporary environments, 5) festivals, fairs and cultural events.
4	1) Regional artisanal production, 2) calendar of festivals, fairs, exhibitions and cultural events, 3) tangible and intangible cultural heritage, 4) National and International Poncho Festival of San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca, 5) Book fairs in different cities of Argentina, 6) Workshops on artisanal textile techniques, 7) Workshops on creative cooking, nutrition and practical classes on regional dishes, 8) Workshops on the use of native plants.

Source: Own elaboration.

These creative products enhance the tourist offerings in each destination and foster opportunities for sustainable development by leveraging the cultural and natural resources and heritage of each region. They cater to the growing demand for knowledge, learning, and experimentation in creative environments that challenge personal and spiritual fulfillment. As suggested by Castro-Cuadras et al. [16] and Brito-Rodríguez [17] with studies focused on the relationship between creative tourism and sustainability.

Additionally, according to Richards [11], there is a symbolic value in creativity through the interaction of tourists, culture, and context, a view supported by Landry [9] and Serrano-Leyva et al. [6].

4.3 Demand for creative tourism

This type of tourism not only aims to attract visitors but also

encourages the active participation of the local community in the promoted creative activities, seeking benefits for all. In this way, potential demand is consolidated with tourists who engage with the local population in co-creating their travel experiences in various creative environments of the destination.

Specifically, demand is consolidated with: i) tourists actively participating in courses and experiences characteristic of the place, focused on nature, gastronomy, and art [12], ii) participants in creative activities and events promoted on creative billboards throughout the year [13], iii) visitors to creative spaces and participants in events scheduled on creative billboards [14], iv) tourists interested in learning experiences around recreational activities inspired by local culture and its various manifestations [15].

Creative tourism reveals motivation and travel preferences based on new attitudes among tourists, such as the choice of shorter trips to nearby places, a preference for natural and rural spaces, and an interest in learning something new. Additionally, Serrano-Leyva et al. [6] mention the focus on personalized itineraries and activities, moving away from mass tourism to enhance the travel experience. Meanwhile, Richards [11] emphasizes that creativity enhances the tourist's practice at the destination and Emmendoerfer et al. [18] reveal the importance of residents' participation in the various creative activities.

4.4 Actions and strategies for implementing creativity

Creative tourism places great importance on preserving natural resources, conserving both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and involving the local community in creating authentic and innovative tourist experiences. Consequently, it emphasizes the implementation of various actions, as detailed in Table 6 for each analyzed case.

Table 6. Actions to implement creativity in the cases analyzed

Case	Implementation Actions
1	Offering specialized tours that leverage the strengths and opportunities of each locality, along with courses and workshops where tourists can learn and participate in everyday activities, emphasizes interaction with the local population [12].
2	Recovery and conservation of heritage for creative purposes, along with the consolidation of public-private partnerships, aim to establish collaborations between government entities, non-profit organizations, private companies, and other relevant actors to work together on creative projects [13].
3	Consolidation of cultural spaces and academic centers that foster creativity, along with unique tourist establishments [14].
4	Serving today's tourists in creative environments by generating co-creation experiences that involve interaction between the tourist and the destination [15].

Source: Own elaboration.
Note: The implementation actions in each case are integrated into the consolidation of creative tourism.

In the context of planning and strategies for creative tourism, Case 1 prioritizes coexistence and interaction with the local population to enrich the tourist experience and strengthen this relationship [12]. For Case 2, Pareti and García-Henche [13] propose evaluating the diffusion and perception of the destination's transformation, based on the implementation of

creative actions for tourism. In Case 3, the main strategies focus on promoting the creative offer, boosting cultural tourist flow, and encouraging citizen participation [14], highlighting the strategic management of the tourism sector. Finally, in Case 4, the strategy centers on promoting a cultural billboard and planning various activities with creative content [15].

In this context, creativity represents a strategic instrument for this tourism segment, as attested by García Suárez and Pulido Fernández [10], Serrano-Leyva et al. [6] and Richards [11].

In all the cases analyzed, the involvement of tourists, the host population, and the creative industries in providing environments and scenarios for creativity is required. Creative tourism promotes cultural marketing strategies, the promotion of creative industries, the development of cultural hubs, and the organization of cultural events and activities. By its nature, this type of tourism allows for an authentic and meaningful experience, fostering the participation and interaction of tourists with residents and the integration of creative establishments.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Creative tourism demonstrates an intrinsic link with the culture, cultural expressions, and specific traditions of each place. It recognizes creativity as a factor that provides opportunities to meet visitors' interests by leveraging the destination's environment and attractions, as well as the skills, experience, and talent of the local population. This approach does not overlook the need to expand the perception of resources and recognize the value of the place's history and culture.

Creativity becomes a driver for the sustainable development and authenticity of tourist destinations, offering enriching and meaningful experiences. These include self-fulfillment for tourists through the co-creation of participatory experiences with the community, not only as a distinctive element of the destination but also as a generator of tourist products. In this way, creative tourism can make urban regeneration of district degraded areas [19] or increase opportunities for smaller places [20].

Thus, creative experiences are a fundamental component of creative tourism development. Creativity and culture can drive economic growth, connect creative industries with tourism, promote demand, and enhance the destination's image, fostering sustainable development and contributing to improved competitiveness.

Finally, the findings of this research provide new insights into creativity and creative tourism. Future research could explore the following lines of study: analysis of the actual and potential supply, review of creative products, inventory of creative resources, perception of tourist and population satisfaction, and case studies of creative cities.
The main limitation of this study is the limited number of papers that fulfill the search criteria and their availability within open sources.

REFERENCES

[1] OECD. (2014). Tourism and the Creative Economy. OECD Publishing. http://doi.org/10.1787/9789264207875-en

[2] Richards, G. (2011a). Tourism development trajectories:

¿from culture to creativity? Tourism & Management Studies, 6: 9-15. https://www.tmstudies.net/index.php/ectms/article/view/131.

[3] UNESCO. (2024). Creative cities network. https://www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities.

[4] Richards, G. Raymond, C. (2000). Creative tourism. ATLAS News, 23(8): 16-20. https://www.academia.edu/1785786/Creative_Tourism_Richards_and_Raymond_2000.

[5] UNESCO. (2006). Towards Sustainable Strategies for Creative Tourism: Discussion report of the planning meeting for 2008 International Conference on Creative Tourism. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000159811.

[6] Serrano-Leyva, B., Díaz-Pompa, F., Feria-Velázquez, F. Richards, G. (2021). Estudio bibliométrico sobre turismo creativo en Scopus, tendencias y futuras líneas de investigación. Biblios, 82: 64-86. https://doi.org/10.5195/biblios.2021.979

[7] Korstanje, M. (2015). Un análisis crítico del truismo creativo. Gran Tour: Revista de Investigaciones Turísticas, 12: 23-41. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5329278.

[8] Richards, G. (2011b). Creativity and tourism: the state of the Art. Annals of Tourism Research, 38(4): 1225-1253. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.07.008

[9] Landry, C. (2012). The origins & futures of the creative city. Comedia. https://charleslandry.com/downloads/The_Origins_&_Futures_of_the_Creative_City.pdf.

[10] García Suárez, J.A. Pulido Fernández, J.I. (2014). Creacity, una propuesta de índice para medir la creatividad turística. Revista de Estudios Regionales, 103: 69-108. https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/755/75542882003.pdf.

[11] Richards, G. (2020). Designing creative places: The role of creative tourism. Annals of Tourism Research, 85: 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102922

[12] Mazarrasa, K. (2016). El turismo experiencial y creativo: El caso de Cantabria. International Journal of Scientific Managment Tourism, 2(3): 195-203. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5665941.

[13] Pareti, S. García-Henche, B. (2020). Barrio Matadero-Franklin, de mercado popular a barrio artístico-cultural. Conservación y capitalización, a través de turismo creativo y co-creación. ACE: Architecture, City and Environment, 15(45): 9528. http://doi.org/10.5821/ace.15.45.9528

[14] Pulido-Fernández, J. I., García Suárez, J. A., Casado-Montilla, J., y Rodríguez-Díaz, B. (2021). La medición de la creatividad en destinos urbano-culturales españoles. Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles, (89). https://doi.org/10.21138/bage.3074

[15] Mansilla, M. (2021). Turismo creativo: fundamentos y posibilidades de desarrollo en Argentina. Revista de Turismo e Identidad, 2(2): 125-153. https://revistas.uncu.edu.ar/ojs3/index.php/turismoeindentidad/article/view/5484.

[16] Castro-Cuadras, D., Herrera Prado, A., Larrañaga Núñez, A.M., Lizárraga Patrón, A. (2024). El Turismo Creativo y Desarrollo Sustentable: análisis de literatura. El Periplo Sustentable, (47): 7-22. https://doi.org/10.36677/elperiplo.v0i47.21927

[17] Brito-Rodríguez, M. (2023). La creatividad en el turismo: Rutas hacia la sustentabilidad. Pluralidad y Consenso, 12(56): 68-78. https://revistaibd.senado.gob.mx/historico/2023/56

[18] Emmendoerfer, M., De Almeida, T.C., Richards, G., Marques, L. (2023). Co-creation of local gastronomy for regional development in a slow city. Tourism & Management Studies, 19(2): 51-60. https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.2023.190204

[19] Machado Pritsch, T.V., Gomes e Silva, E.C., de Oliveira da Silva, B. de Mello Rossini, D. (2024). Regeneración urbana y turismo creativo: un estudio sobre la Red Distrito C, en Porto Alegre, Brasil. Dimensiones Turísticas, 8: 1-32. https://doi.org/10.47557/NLEB9344

[20] Richards, G. (2019). Creative tourism: Opportunities for smaller places? Tourism & Management Studies, 15(SI), 7-10. https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.2019.15si01