

Article

Unlocking the Creative Potential: A Case Study of Luoyang City's Creative Tourism Development

Ruixi Guo ¹, IokTeng Esther Kou ^{2,*}  and Qingrong Jiang ³

¹ School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR, China; 23092399g@connect.polyu.hk

² Faculty of International Tourism and Management, City University of Macau, Macau SAR, China

³ School of Tourism Management, Zhuhai City Polytechnic, Zhuhai 519090, China

* Correspondence: estherkou@cityu.mo

Abstract: With the demand for high-quality and personalized tourism experiences, creative tourism has flourished as a novel form of tourism activity. However, there is limited knowledge regarding the viewpoint of suppliers and the essential creative elements that support business sustainability. To bridge this research gap, the current study conducted a qualitative study to uncover critical creative elements (CCE) from experienced suppliers. The data were derived from interviews with 20 key informants who were members of a leading creative tourism business. Inclusion of recommendations for destination decision-makers, attraction managers, and aspiring entrepreneurs interested in engaging in the creative tourism industry is provided.

Keywords: creative tourism; critical creative elements; industry perspective; sustainable development; Luoyang City



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1. Introduction

According to Richards and Raymond's definition [1], creative tourism is a novel form of tourism that provides visitors with opportunities to develop their creative potential through active participation in learning experiences that are distinctive to the holiday destination where they are offered. Richards defines creative tourism as a new type of tourism that merges the cultural and creative industries with the tourism industry to address the needs of tourists who seek to develop their creative potential by engaging deeply with locals [2].

Creative tourism is seen as the logical progression of cultural tourism, transitioning from a service-based economy to an experience-based economy [3]. This transformation has occurred in response to some travelers who are not content with the passive production and consumption linked to traditional cultural tourism. Creative tourism is a promising industry that offers high experiential, participatory, value-added, and cascading effects, creating a richer spiritual experience for visitors. The integration of tourism and cultural elements in a destination can lead to industry revitalization and significantly broaden the scope for industry development. As Richards points out, creative tourism has gained increasing attention over the last decade or so as a catalyst for regional economic growth [4]. In fact, creative tourism has become a crucial aspect of industrial development and a driving force for regional economic growth. Given the demand for innovation and progress in the tourism and cultural sectors, creative tourism, as an extension of traditional cultural tourism, holds significant research significance.

In addition to economic value, the advancement of creative tourism is a part of a broader trend towards creating appealing places for individuals to live, work, and visit [5]. When tourists are potential customers and crucial parties for the sustainable development of this industry, research has demonstrated that creative tourism relies heavily on the active involvement of all stakeholders, as their offerings, investment, participation, interaction,

and value co-creation affect the overall experience. In fact, the definition of creative tourism proposes an active and creative role for both producers and tourists in the context of tourism. Producers are encouraged to utilize their creative resources to provide authentic experiences that are closely tied to the local culture. On the other hand, tourists are expected to actively engage themselves in the creative processes and activities offered by the destination [6].

While it is understood that support from residents, investment from industry and service providers, as well as high level of emotional involvement from customers contribute to the sustainable attachments and appeals [7], the precise understanding of the creative elements that effectively support the longevity of a business remains ambiguous.

The perceptions of senior and managerial individuals in the tourism industry have a substantial impact on its growth and progress due to a variety of factors. Primarily, senior management holds a crucial position in shaping the strategic trajectory of ongoing development efforts [8,9]. Their comprehension of market patterns and capacity to recognize developing possibilities empower them to stay up to date with industry advancements and fulfill customer demands. Their direction assumes a pivotal part in guaranteeing the organization's capacity to stay competitive [10,11] and to meet the requirements of tourists and stakeholders. Furthermore, effective collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders is of utmost importance in the context of tourism development. The involvement of senior management plays a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining connections between the organization and external stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and trade associations [12]. By actively engaging with these stakeholders, senior management can facilitate the cultivation of positive relationships, address concerns, and foster cooperative corporate relations, thereby making significant contributions to the sustainable development of the tourism industry [13]. Moreover, recent advancements have highlighted the significance of mentoring provided by senior management in promoting innovation and adaptability within the realm of tourism development. Through their guidance, senior management encourages a culture of creativity, continuous improvement, and the ability to effectively respond to evolving market dynamics [14]. While additional research on the competitiveness of creative destinations has the potential to provide valuable insights into the realm of creative business [15], there are relatively limited empirical studies on existing travel business that have implementing creative elements for a period of time. This study seeks to examine the distinctive characteristics of the participants in order to explore the following inquiries:

1. What are the various forms of creative tourism products and experiences provided by large creative enterprises?
2. What are the essential creative components found within these sustainable products and experiences?
3. What are some exemplary instances of innovative content that can be derived from the successful practices of prominent creative businesses?

Hence, the primary objective of this research is to utilize a successful case study and the innovative components within the experiences of these creative tourism enterprises to provide valuable insights for creative tourism practitioners and individuals aspiring to enter the industry. To achieve this, the qualitative study employs semi-structure interviews with the creative tourism industry in Luoyang City to uncover creative elements for sustainable business development. The study enriches existing literature through the investigation of creativity and sustainability in an emerging sector of tourism. By illustrating crucial contexts of creative elements through the lens of creative business in major creative tourism city, this study presents theoretical concepts that can be further explored and examined. Additionally, it provides practical insights that can be utilized in the design and planning of creative tourism experiences and products.