

## Initiative and Innovation in Tourism, Discussion on their Applicability in the Context of Sustainable Tourism in Delta Destinations

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**Abstract:** In the economic field, especially in tourism, initiative and innovation are effective ways to finding new approaches to various problems occurring with time or unforeseen, which leads to greater adaptation to ever-changing environment of economic life and resistance to *shocks*, experience having a decisive role. In terms of sustainable tourism not any initiative even if it is an innovative one is appropriate, it is the sector where actions must be thought out long-term and to exist concerns in achieving sustainability in all four branches simultaneously (economic, social, environmental and cultural). In order to achieve sustainable development in the true sense it is not enough to only meet the needs to one of them. Therefore, the challenge lies in finding optimal solutions for each branch separately, but also for making their relationship become sustainable. The need to continually adapt and monitoring the results to improve them, have a primary importance. The paper aims at analyzing in terms of advantages and disadvantages of new tourism forms implementation in a fragile environment as delta, which needs special attention in that it can't be operated at high tourism level, such as mass tourism.

**Keywords:** innovation; sustainable development; sustainable tourism; tourism model; ecotourism

**JEL Classification:** O13; O21; Q26; Q57

### 1. Introduction

Innovation is a concept used so often that it has become common in business language and not only is often applied superficially, what now is recognized as innovative may lose this value in the future by the appearance of new technical developments along with the information progress. So this concept has a continuing, and constant redefinition, fully dynamic, in constant motion. Innovation has been the effect of the desire to change the world, to offer new opportunities, develop or construct other solutions to ensure mankind's evolution. From a point on a map to a complex whole complicated and elaborate process these differences influenced the results and have revolutionized the way of thinking and looking at the world around us.

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Definition of innovation is emerging along with other terms used in dynamic adaptation and change, such as imagination, creativity and initiative, three essential components that lead to innovative results. There are differences of meaning between the three dimensions, although part of the same umbrella semantics. Imagination is the idea, the visual image that a person experiences in mind, which may be expressed or not. Imagination is the first element of the innovation process without which there wouldn't be other, having a higher role than experience or knowledge, therefore Albert Einstein (2009) noted that "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution. It is, strictly speaking, a real factor in scientific research." Instead expressive creativity is imagination outdoors, communicated it in one form or another. Also in literature Robinson<sup>1</sup> and Aronica (2009) defined creativity as "*the process of having original ideas that have value.*" Without initiative we can't begin to assess the quality of an idea because it does not officially exist for a system, so the initiative has a primary role, it takes creativity to a higher level, gives it power and impetus creativity needs to contribute to improving system value or the discovery of completely new solutions - innovative. Thus, innovation is the initiative that propels creativity in areas or activities where it has the potential to be valuable. Innovative in terms of tourism receives new values, helping to better integrate it in this context. Innovation in business is closely related to challenge current ways to solve and address the situation by reinvention thinking, searching for new angles through which to look on an issue. Moreover, the detachment of the previous operating mode provides the appropriate framework for the delivery of different and creative ideas. But to achieve the desired results is not sufficient to find a new model, it must be supported by the company skills in order to be implemented effectively to meet business needs.

After a careful study of the overall innovation within organizations it can be shade the existence of a variety of innovative ways, requiring classifications, such as:

- "*classic process innovations (where the production process is altered);*
  - *information handling innovations (where new forms of knowledge management are adopted);*
  - *management innovations (where the way in which a business is managed is changed);*
  - *institutional innovations (where the structure of the organisation is altered)."*
- (Tashkov et. al, 2011, apud Hjalager, 1997).

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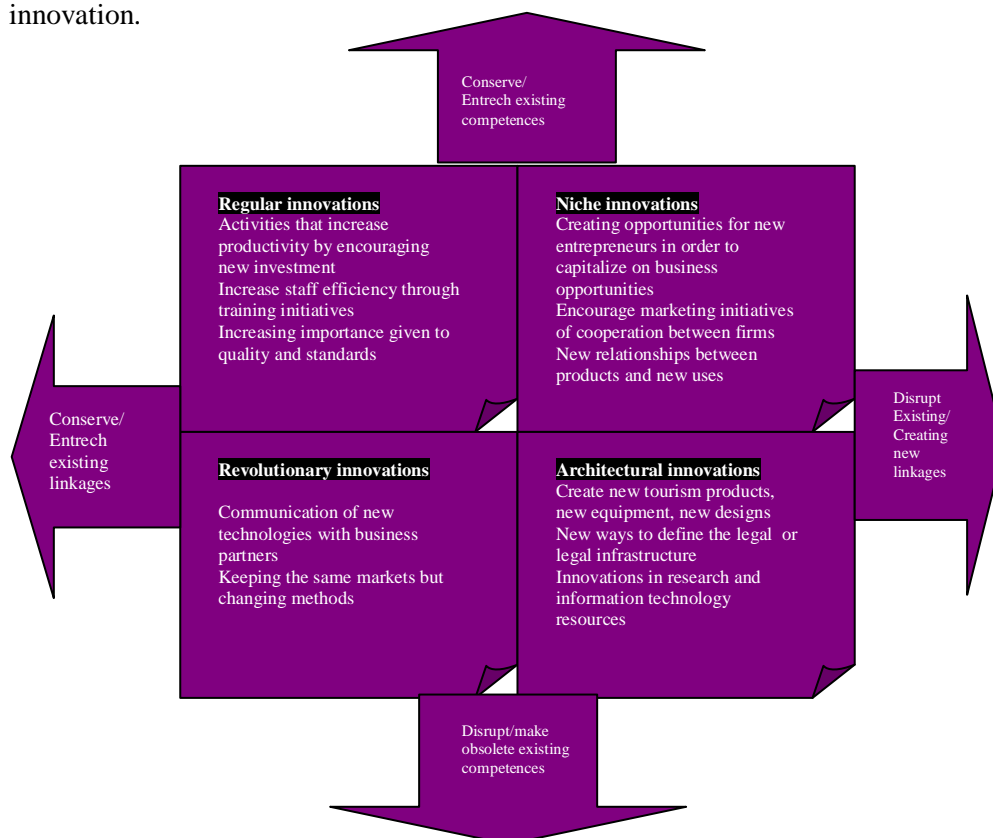
<sup>1</sup> „Ken Robinson is an English author, speaker, and international advisor on education in the arts to government, non-profits, education, and arts bodies. He was Director of The Arts in Schools Project (1985–1989), Professor of Arts Education at the University of Warwick (1989–2001), and was knighted in 2003 for services to education.”

(Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken\\_Robinson\\_\(educationalist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Robinson_(educationalist)))

Another classification that deserves brought to the forefront it is given by innovation in tourism model of Abernathy and Clark (fig. 1), which classifies innovations based on novelty ideas and dynamic relationships between companies. Thus, they proposed four types of innovations (Hjalager, 2002):

- *“Regular innovations;*
- *Niche innovations;*
- *Revolutionary innovations;*
- *Architectural innovations.”*

Given this classification representation as shown in Figure 1, it can be said that these types of innovations are generally valid for all sectors in which a company operates. Analysing structural is noted that the mildest changes occur in the case of regular innovations and the most tangible changes are in the category of architectural innovation. This idea is supported by activities in each form of innovation.



**Figure 1. The Abernathy and Clark model tourism perspective**

Source: Author - adapted form (Anne-Mette Hjalager, 2002)

Innovations at the lowest level (regular innovations) have an internal nature, here we talk about investment in the company through innovations in technology; re-planning activities; training of staff in the company, which is very important in tourism - hospitality, courtesy and professionalism of employees can make the difference between an acceptable package tour and an outstanding one; extend to other markets and/or acquiring a higher certifications depending on the quality of services provided. In the niche innovation can be shape-related initiatives seeking opportunities and accept the challenges that these involve by strengthening professional relationships with other companies in complementary fields that brings new types of customers, different ways of thinking of the final product and establish innovative relationships between products with which customer needs are met at a high level. Regarding the segment of revolutionary innovation, the emphasis is on gaining skills to improve the achievement of objectives in several companies by providing means (eg technology, electronics) to revolutionize ways of conducting and results of the activities organized by changing the operating mode, leading to the initiation of training courses for executives and management. In tourism that can be translated through the adoption of specific methods to facilitate communication between the tour operator unit and potential tourist, for example e-booking, virtual tourism. The most radical innovation is one that can redefine the concept of tourism, architectural innovations produce profound changes, being invented tourism products completely different from the previous ones with new forms of tourism, attracting different and unsatisfied tourists with current tourism offer, looking for something new, a unique experience, an adventure (eg arctic ice hotels).

Also, the model of Abernathy and Clark presents some interesting inter-relationship between the above forms of initiative. If we highlight the horizontal nature of relationships between companies, from left to right is necessary to dissolve existing or create new ones, due to the evolving nature of innovation, and in the opposite direction, from right to left relations become conservative or needs improvement of already formed links. In terms of vertical, retained the same side evolutionary, such as past skills cancellation occurs from top to bottom or acquire their old character along with vertical development, bottom-up knowledge are maintained or recovered. In other words, if we denote the weakest innovations with “-” and stronger with “+”, from - to + both the relationships between companies and novelty skills have a dynamic much more accelerated, producing deeper changes and thus the possibility of more accentuated innovations.

## 2. Independence and Cooperation in Tourism Innovation

Independence and cooperation are two terms found in contrast if we consider a general context, but in this paper, thinking about the valences that innovation has, we can accept that together add value to the innovation. Independence gives creativity, new ideas uninfluenced by previous findings, and cooperation facilitates the link between creativity and experience to implement a sustainable development program. Both are vital and must be in balance to create the conditions required to reshape tourism.

Taking a natural insight to the main purpose of this article is necessary to define concept of sustainable development. In the Brundtland Report in 1987 (Tilbury et al, 2002) is conveyed the idea that this is development that meets the demands of society today but also allows future generations to benefit from the same rights to achieve its objectives. Sustainable development in tourism has led to another concept - sustainable tourism that combines sustainable qualities with tourism goals, aiming to ensure a bidirectional connection: sustainable tourism - sustainable development and sustainable development - sustainable tourism both factors influence each other and reinforce. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that is under the umbrella of sustainable tourism, where tourists' education is a priority, which separates it from the rest of the types of sustainable tourism. Geographically, this kind of tourism is practiced successfully in protected areas, natural reservation, in fragile environments, being the most delicate form of tourism.

Delta is the youngest land mostly located in Romania, in the northwest of Black Sea, characterized by a specific individuality both in Europe and worldwide. "Seen as vast territory that can provide a rich tourist, attracts through its uniqueness, being recognized and appreciated for qualities such as (Diaconescu, 2012):

- The unique delta in the world that has been declared entirely a Biosphere Reservation in 1990 (DDBR) through integration into the international network of biosphere reservations through the Man and Biosphere Programme - MAB UNESCO as part of the UNESCO Cultural and Natural Heritage;
- Declaration within the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance, especially for waterbirds habitat;
- Obtaining the European Diploma for Protected Areas provided by the Council of Europe in 2000, updated in 2005;
- Is ranked third in the world for biodiversity, living on its territory over 5000 species of plants and animals I and II ranked are Barrier Reef in Australia and, respectively, Galapagos Archipelago \_ Ecuador. According to the National Institute Danube Delta there are 284 unique species in Romania and 39 are unique scientifically;

- Recognition received for the largest area of reedbeds in the world - 1750 km square.”

Given the obvious ecotourism initiatives in the world, most of them have steadily improved environmental laws, campaigning for the rights of local communities close collaboration between all stakeholders (local communities, local government, government, tour operators, and so on), urgency measures to reduce risks of natural hazards, policies of infrastructure, biodiversity protection, the conservation and promotion of culture, the delimitation of protected areas, etc.

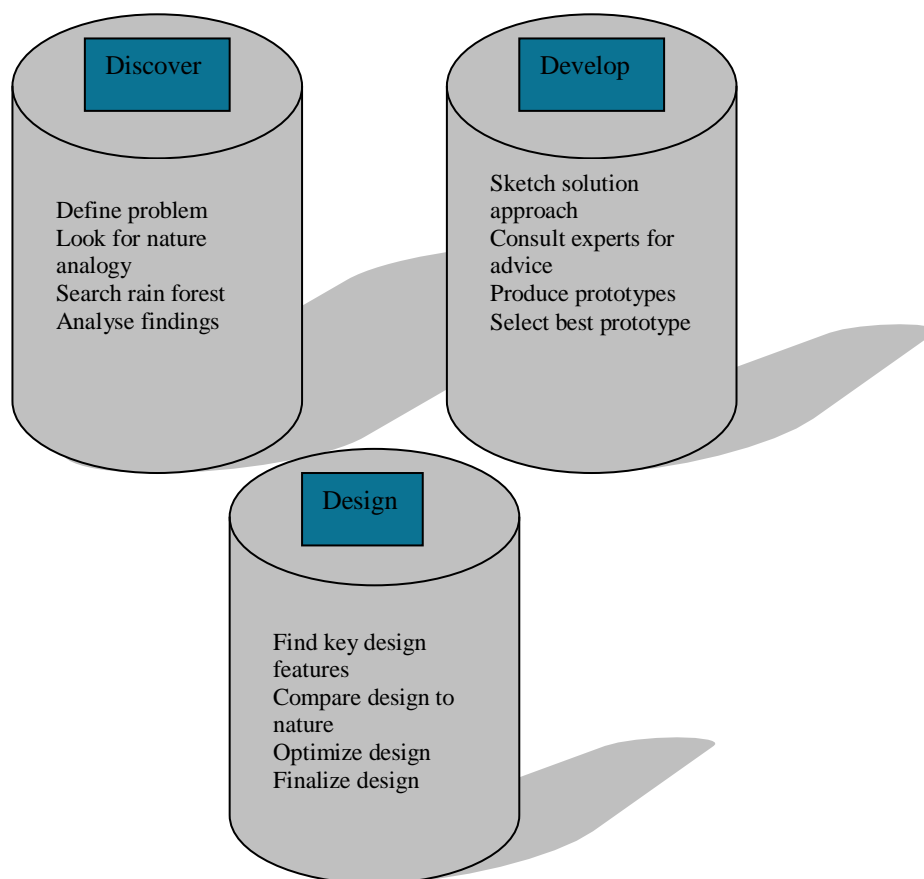
In carrying out this paper I stopped to talk about these innovative initiatives, less known in the practical specialized.

### - **3D Corporate Tourism**

This type of tourism has a three-dimensional character, the three main pillar are Discover, Develop and Design. Being a niche tourism needs a small segment of tourists, giving them a unique and interesting experience. People engaged in scientific fields such as biology, engineering, materials science, nanotechnology are brought together for cooperation and exchange of creative ideas, innovative based on nature's designs, the main purpose is to find solutions to various problems by searching for answers in nature. Participants come from different countries, giving diversity in the way of thinking and a heterogeneous network of people that creates solutions and most varied opinions. The project team participates in various sessions, following a program of free talks and creative ways to find new approaches (eg. brainstorming).

First, nature is viewed from the angle of functionality, how it works in relation to human needs. In the second stage natural solutions are transposed in technical structures made by the team. The last stage is the period when the models created are adapting again seeking to find out the way of functioning system of natural elements.

With these data, we can think that this model may also apply to tourism in the Danube Delta. Knowing that sustainable situation in the delta is far from being accomplished, a meeting between experts in various fields, create the appropriate trigger for constructive discussions that finalize with concrete solutions.



**Figure 2. The three main pillars of the 3D Corporate Tourism**

*Source: (Gebeshuber & Burhanuddin, 2011)*

Benefits can be numerous - inspiration by sharing experience that comes with the sense of sustainable development, listening nature and raising awareness, gaining a high level of environmental education. Disadvantages are given by limiting equipment brought into the area, difficult access with necessary study equipment on small channels.

#### - **Screen Tourism**

Being called film and television tourism, this type of tourism promotion quickly gained ground among the ways to make known certain tourist destinations, attracting more and more tourists excited about romantic places, beautiful and exotic landscapes, culture of specific areas where the video was taken, and the impressive story of the film, making possible an emotional connection with the destination. Future tourist has the opportunity to receive a fraction of what it would

mean a holiday there, wanting to see more, so that when he arrives to visit those places, he is already informed of sightseeing he could see.

Typology of tourism's screen is varied depending on how tourism is valued by film viewing experience (Tucea, Nistoreanu, 2011), adapted from Busby & Klug, 2001:

- “Film-induced tourism - as part of a larger holiday – the tourist visit a film location or take part in a video tour without having previous knowledge about the destination.
- Film-induced tourism – as a main purpose of a special interest - the location and holiday booking is made as a result of its image in film.
- Film-induced tourism – as strength of the holiday – the beauty of natural landscapes, historical sites, and actors can serve as points of maximum interest.
- Film-induced tourism –as a place where it is assumed that the shooting took place- the filming sites are visited, even if the film presents a different reality.
- Film-induced tourism - as part of a romantic holiday - tourists visit places shown in movies as special, warm, full of love
- Film-induced tourism - as a reason to escape - tourists want to temporarily escape from the reality of everyday life.”

For destinations where tourism is weighted by the principles of environmental and nature conservation (Danube Delta), this form of television induced tourism is not a good choice for several reasons: exposure is very high, leading to an increase tourists; risk of misunderstanding the special character of these destinations; rising prices; environmental aggression by strong noise and habitat change to better serve the needs of the film, creating clusters of people and agitation, altered culture by entering different values and sudden loss of local communities identity; the risk that tourists may be disappointed by increasing expectations of tourist destination.

#### - **Slow Travel**

Slow travel arose from the need to truly know visited tourist destination, choosing to spend more time discovering the less commercial places for tourists, but part of the unique character of places and of their untold story, helping tourists to reach a high level of understanding of the tourist experience. The goal is not to see as many sights within a limited time, but to explore an area in close proximity giving patience to absorb the atmosphere played by it, which is not possible by conventional tourist trip. There is a difference between visiting a place and living in an environment; in this kind of tourism, those who choose this form of holiday want to live there, to see how people live, to gain an authentic experience.

Nistoreanu, Dorobantu & Tucea (2011), approach the matter of slow-travel tourism principles:



- The trip is seen more as a goal than a way to achieve the purpose of an agenda, journey itself is the only motivation for the one who initiates it;
- Sites should have an authentic character, picturesque, revealing the unspoiled natural and cultural values they are looking for;
- Away from the city agitation and life lived in speed, bring a change of pace, which is beneficial physically and mentally;
- It is a spiritual journey.

Slow travel can be an ideal option to explore the land of the Delta, being present advantages both for the traveler and environment existing there. Giving time and patience to this trip, the land is more difficult to access and retain the opportunity to preserve and recover after tourist exploitation, accessing areas being made gradually over several days in adjacent areas. It is also suitable for wildlife lovers, who know how to respect and protect nature, having the culture of ecotourism. Enable local people to contribute to enriching travel experience by providing accommodation, which integrates the traveler in the uniqueness of landscape. It is a noninvasive active involvement in the life of this area.

Thus, independence is positive to break the usual patterns and thinking outside the box, but sometimes the simplest solutions are the most innovative, especially those addressing the needs of communities and land exactly suited to what they actually want. For example a simple irrigation device can make a difference in terms of productivity in agriculture, increasing production with a minimum of land area exploitation. Also, the initiative to organise craft and workshops contribute to preserving the traditions and create a better living standards for inhabitants. Traditional occupations stimulation is performed in the Danube Delta through canotca project, which is a boat easier than the traditional model through which tourists can reach quietly to different areas on its waters, not disturbing the ecosystems living there.

### 3. Conclusions

Initiative and innovation within sustainable development are part of a more complex system. I believe that sustainable dimension is revealed as a *human side*, sensitive, requiring inner changes reflected in the lifestyle, in the values that guide us so that we can embrace sustainable development in all forms. And this is actually a personal development, based on education that determines *awareness*, and awareness touches people in turn, leading to a high spiritual development, without selfish exploitation, to offer before you receive is a basic principle in sustainable development also.

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