Innovation and Authenticity in Tourism

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CONTEXT

- Innovation and authenticity are buzzwords and imperatives in tourism.
- Innovation often reduced to even modestly new products or processes (Hjalager, 2010; Brooker et al., 2012) and authenticity associated vaguely with traditions or origins (Cohen, 1988).
- Apparent duality between these concepts doesn’t exclude meeting points (e.g. emerging authenticity [Cohen, 1988]).

Smallahove: an example of emerging authenticity

CONCEPTS

- Innovation: "Innovation refers to the process of bringing any new, problem solving idea into use. [...] it involves the capacity to change and adapt" (Kanter, cited from Hall & Williams, 2008).
- Authenticity is controversial in tourism studies since MacCannel’s work about «staged authenticity» (1973).
- Authenticity typology (Chhabra, 2012):
  - Objective
  - Constructive
  - Negotiated
  - Post-modern/existentialist
  - Theoretical
- Few or no literature exists on the two concepts combined.

AIM

- Identify:
  1. how innovation and authenticity are perceived in tourism;
  2. and what convergence and opposition exist between innovation and authenticity in tourism.

METHODOLOGY

- Mix method:
  - Nominal group technique (NGT)
  - Questionnaire
  - Secondary data
- NGT:
  - In your opinion, what characteristics of [insert name of the organisation], illustrate its innovation? Name 8 characteristics.
  - In your opinion, what characteristics of [insert name of the organisation], illustrate its authenticity? Name 8 characteristics.
- Sample:
  - 4 tourism organisations;
  - 1 group of their employees; and 1 group of tourists
  - n = 6-10 per NGT

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- e.g. NGT @ Vallée Bras-du-Nord:
  - generated 21 characteristics of innovation & 22 characteristics of authenticity

CONCLUSIONS

- Innovation:
  - Characteristics generated corroborate literature
  - Business innovation more represented then its product
- Authenticity:
  - Characteristics generated do not corroborate literature well
  - Authenticity seldom studied in nature / nature tourism
  - Natural heritage & territory represented more then business
- Challenges and opportunity:
  - Preliminary results
  - Innovation & authenticity categories limit convergence in analysis
  - Inductive and iterative analysis to be considered

REFERENCES


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