CROSS-BORDER INTER-DESTINATION COLLABORATION
AND INNOVATIONS – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Today tourism destinations faced with extremely intense competitive environment on
the tourism market seek to enhance their competitive advantages through inter-destination
collaboration. Especially mature tourism destinations coping with the challenges of their
product repositioning acknowledge benefits of such collaborative networking due to its
innovative potential. Numerous studies and research confirm the cooperative behaviour
and partnerships on the destination level to be the key condition for sustainable planning
and long-term development, but notwithstanding inter-destination partnerships, benefits
(cost reduction, destination product innovation and efficiency), also challenges and
hindrances understanding need to be carefully considered in this context. A systematic
analysis of literature review on the topic will be elaborated aiming to provide a holistic
overview and possible platforms for further scientific research in that field. Inter-
destination collaboration seems to be an innovative approach in continuously challenging
competitiveness vortex of tourism destination market, which requires highly conscious
and intelligent individuals.

Key words: cross-border inter-destination collaboration, innovations, destination competitiveness, partnership networks.

INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalization and emerging super nationalism, international
cross-border tourism became strengthen in providing more opportunities for
cooperation between neighbor destinations. Global tourism interactions force
tourism destinations to cooperate on the level of intra-destination but even more
inter-destination in order to become competitive on a global tourism market. The
intense competition on the tourism market represents a challenge for tourism
stakeholders requiring from them a lot of work and effort to establish intra-
destination cooperation (Żemla, 2016; Jegdić, Tomka, Knežević, Koščak, Milošević, Škrbić & Keča, 2015). Intra-destination cooperation and coordination are the foundation for better and fruitful inter-destination cooperation, which might replace the traditional orientation of destination competition providing innovative tourism initiatives (Fyall, Garrod & Tosun, 2006; Vodeb & Nemec Rudež, 2016). With cross-border tourism initiatives, promotion of sustainable tourism and development of innovation in tourism sector the European Union (EU) offers many reasons to become leading tourism destination (Makkonen, Wiliams, Weidenfeld & Kaisto, 2018). In the EU we can already identify many inter cooperation initiatives focusing on innovative strategies for example InnoBB - Brandenburg and Berlin, Germany, Lower and Upper Austria specialization areas, taking into account the cross-border innovative dimensions and the Dutch-Belgian corridor Eindhoven-Leuven with innovation IMEC and Holst Centre (OECD, 2013). Best practices guidance for tourism innovation (CSES, 2013) and several programs and initiatives for development of sustainable transnational tourism products has been established and funded by European Union (European Commission, 2016a). Besides, cross-border cooperation in EU has been founded within European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI – 2014 - 2020), previously European Neighborhood and Partnership (2007 – 2013) with much emphasis on tourism innovation projects (European Commission, 2016b).

The most complex tasks considering innovations within the inter-destination collaboration are identifying and engaging key actors (destination stakeholders) with sufficient expertise for economic development and knowledge transfers. This paper aims to shed some light on the topic by analytically reviewing results from previous studies from the field of cross-border inter-destination collaboration and innovations. Therefore, we present some of the recent research, merging the fields of cross-border inter-destination collaboration and innovations in tourism.

CROSS-BORDER INTER-DESTINATION COLLABORATION AND INNOVATIONS

The conceptualization of cross-border meaning is based on previous major research on impacts on individuals living close to borders and presented by Paasi (1996, p. 75) who states: »Boundaries are not merely lines on the ground but above all, manifestations of social practice and discourse. The construction of the meaning of communities and their boundaries occurs through narratives: ‘stories’ that provide people with common experiences, history and memories, and therefore bind these people together«. Therefore, the definition of the cross-border region, which might include many neighbor destinations consist of “all adjacent territories belonging to different nations, regardless of differences in terms of size, geographic conditions, history, culture and socio-economic conditions, whose economic and social life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international boundary” (Weidenfeld, 2013, p. 192). Cross-border cooperation within the European regions, so-called Euro regions separated by administrative
borders has so far received as much of the research focus on the topic. Based on the results, cross-border cooperation promote opportunity for economic, social and territorial cohesion and poses significant potential for economic development, innovation and knowledge sharing (Hills, 2016; Herzog, 2014; Johnson, 2009; Perkmann, 2003; Perkmann, 2002; Trippl 2010).

Many authors has identified the importance of the inter-destination cooperation (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Fyall, Garrod & Wang, 2012; Henderson, 2001a; Naipaul, Wang & Okumus, 2009; Wang Hutchinson, Okumus & Naipaul, 2013; Żemła, 2016; Vodeb & Nemec Rudež, 2016) however, Żemła (2016) argue that the phenomenon was not yet been analyzed in-depth.

Nowadays many global tourism destinations compete not only to attract global tourists’ visits but also to act sustainable with innovative solutions that lead to attractive tourism products and initiatives. Looking at regional tourism development huge competition between neighbor destination weakness the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the regional tourism development (Prideaux & Cooper, 2002; Jegdić et al., 2015). Therefore, there are many reasons why neighbor destinations ought to cooperate with each other. The few most important reasons identified in studies of Wang et al. (2013) and Naipaul et al. (2009) are creation of spatially wider tourism region for attracting larger number of tourists, enhancing destination product portfolio, cost reduction and efficiency of marketing campaigns. Since the inter-destination cooperation is happening generally between two neighbor countries with different government, political and economic system, the implementation might be even more difficult and demanding than establishing intra-destination collaboration (Żemła, 2016) within the same socio-economic and political system. Researchers has identified many cross-border tourism governance obstacles seen as “multi-scalar institutional mismatches” to lacking connection between cross-border key stakeholders (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2017; Blasco, Guia & Prats, 2014). Makkonen et al. (2018) presented the factors that interfere with establishing cross-border knowledge transfer and innovations. Among those technological capabilities and human capital presents the core for successful knowledge transfers initiatives. Additionally the trust between the cross-border partners is essential component for success and therefore influences the choice of innovation partners (Zach & Hill, 2017).

Innovation processes is the major driving force and essential generator of growth in global market economies that influence increasing productivity, profitability and quality, thus improving the overall competitiveness of the tourism economy (OECD, 2006). Innovation in tourism sector is a concept that falls within the scope of service and innovation and thus cannot completely share the general concepts of innovation (Tintoré, Aguiló, Bravo & Mulet 2003; Hall, 2008; Camisón & Monfort-Mir, 2012; Križaj, Brodnik & Bukovec, 2014). Nevertheless, the innovations in the tourism sector can be linked and implemented to other non-tourism sectors creating new knowledge and lead to product innovations (Makkonen & Hokkanen, 2013; Weindenfeld et al., 2010). Innovation
is thus becoming a key factor in economic development and success with many positive examples in the tourism sector as well. Tourism destinations consist of many tourism stakeholders that rely on shared recourses, networks and mutual activities (Hjalager, 2000), consequently represent an enormous challenge for management in order to coordinate, organize and enhance the innovation process.

Achieving positive results from inter-destination cooperation takes not only time and efforts but also require of destinations from both sides of the border to think about innovative ideas and tourism solutions. This was confirmed recently in the study of two Mediterranean destinations Portorož in Slovenia and Opatija in Croatia conducted by Vodeb and Nemec Rudež (2016) where respondents involved in a qualitative research declared that establishing cooperation between tourism stakeholders from both destinations means a starting point for building new, innovative tourist offer and arrangements. The tourist offer and arrangements based on the inter-destination collaboration might result in reaching new and distant markets with a common goal to overcome the seasonality issues and upgrade destination product quality.

Lundquist and Trippl (2009) prepared theoretical analysis of different stages in the development of cross-border regional innovation systems with comparative analysis of the innovation capabilities of two cross-border areas in Europe, namely the Öresund (Southern Sweden and Eastern Denmark), and the Centrope (Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary). The results showed that the Öresund region and the Centrope area differ enormously regarding their capacity to develop an integrated innovation space (Lindquist & Trippl, 2009), which is probably due to functional and cognitive distance between the observed areas. The Öresund region is clearly many steps ahead when compared to the Centrope area in fields of knowledge transfer with not many economic and innovation inequalities, while for Centrope region the observations are that cross-border knowledge interactions are generally weakly developed. Additionally “the integration process is still relatively strongly oriented on exploiting cost and price differences, leading to rather asymmetrical economic linkages” (Lindquist & Trippl, 2009, p. 28).

Ness, Aarstad, Haughland and Grønseth (2014) using a case study method explored the contribution of inter-destination ties to destination development for Innovative Mountain Tourism (IMT) in Southern and Eastern Norway. The results indicates that bridge ties initiate network dynamics between public sector actors, multi-destination actors, and industry-specific product and service providers play important and complementary roles in this developmental process (Ness, Aarstad, Haughland & Grønseth, 2014).

Fyall, Garrod and Tosun (2006) reported similar findings claiming that inter-destination collaboration presents an opportunity for trust and commitment between partners and therefore it enables a partner network. Indeed, tourism destinations are not networks per se but with equal participation, introduction of innovations; collective action and orchestrated coordination among the
participants the destination management is capable of accomplish that (Żemła, 2016; Vodeb & Nemec Rudež, 2016).

Stoffelen and Vanneste (2017) compared the position of tourism in region-building processes in the newly developing German-Czech cross-border region and the more ‘mature’ German-Belgian borderlands. They discovered that development of local cross-border tourism projects is no guarantee for positive destination wide regional development impacts (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2017). Weidenfeld (2013), who introduced the concept of cross-border innovation systems to the tourism literature, discovered that much more attention has been given to the impact of the geographic conditions of cross-border regions instead to the potential contribution of tourism facilitating innovative processes. The study findings point out the potential role of the tourism sector in enhancing regional knowledge and promoting cohesion and competitiveness between cross-border regions, which urges comprehensive empirical research in order to understand cross-border funded initiatives.

Similar conclusions are presented in the study of Makkonen et al. (2018) using research method of interviews with participants in tourism related EU-funded projects in the Finnish – Russian cross-border region. The findings of the study outlines the importance of EU-funding in facilitating knowledge transfer and innovation between the two countries. Despite the fact that differences in language, business culture and administrative/legislative systems present the practical barriers to cooperation, that can be overcome using cross-border differences in culture and technological capabilities which drive cross-border knowledge transfer and innovation in the cross-border region (Makkonen et al. 2018).

In Table 1, we present most recent, relevant research results regarding our research goal, namely general methodology and findings in the research field of inter-destination collaboration and innovations in Europe. The qualitative scientific approach prevails with interviews, comparative analysis, case studies, content analysis and conceptual frameworks. Most importantly, findings indicate mostly benefits of inter-destination collaboration in the sense of dynamics contribution to the partnerships, tourism/destination product improvement and collaborative innovation process development. The most important findings of the studies fall under the role of knowledge transfer and innovation in the context of cross-border regional innovation systems.

<p>| Table 1: Inter-destination collaboration and innovation initiatives |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>METH.</th>
<th>RESP.</th>
<th>INTER-DESTINATION COLLABORATION FINDINGS</th>
<th>INNOVATION FIELD</th>
<th>REGION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ness, Aarstad, Haugland &amp; Grønseth (2014)</td>
<td>Qualitative study; semi-structured interviews, extensive archival data, and observation</td>
<td>13 org. (public sector actors, multi-destination firms, and industry consulting firms and service providers)</td>
<td>Bridge ties contribute to important dynamics in the intra-destination network.</td>
<td>Destination development (Innovative Mountain Tourism (IMT))</td>
<td>7 destinations (Southern and Eastern Norway)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jegdić, Tomka, Knežević, Koščak, Milošević, Škrbić &amp; Keča (2016)</td>
<td>General analytic-synthetic method of research (document content analysis)</td>
<td>Regional destination organization in Slovenia</td>
<td>Cooperation amongst destinations within a wider tourist region for improvement of the tourist offer</td>
<td>Future applications of network analysis should also pay attention to imitation and innovation processes</td>
<td>Regional destination organizations in Slovenia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fuglsang, Sørensen, Jørgensen &amp; Nordli, (2016)</td>
<td>A case study of two extreme cases of tourist destinations</td>
<td>Danish beach destination: key persons in the innovation project, persons representing other private and organizational actors; Downhill cycling: five informants – the key players in the development phase</td>
<td>Collaborative innovation processes development in tourist destinations, where conditions are hostile to such collaborative efforts;</td>
<td>The concepts of innovation sphere, diplomacy and compromise</td>
<td>Danish summer holiday destination; Downhill cycling in an Alpine ski centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoffelen &amp; Vanneste, (2017)</td>
<td>Reconstruction of the evolution of cross-border tourism</td>
<td>Five semi-structured in-depth interviews (policymakers connected)</td>
<td>Political mobilization of cross-border history and identity may lower the perceived barriers of administrative borders</td>
<td>The cross-border Vogtland region between the federal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Key Structures and Dimensions</td>
<td>Innovation Approach</td>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>Lindquist &amp; Tripl, (2009)</td>
<td>Conceptual framework + a comparative analysis of cross-border RIS development</td>
<td>The key structures and dimensions of the cross-border RIS development in the Oresund region and the Centrope area.</td>
<td>Regional innovation system approach</td>
<td>The Oresund region (Southern Sweden and Eastern Denmark, and the Centrope area (Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vodeb &amp; Nemec Rudež (2016)</td>
<td>Qualitative research method with Semi-structured face-to-face interviews (representatives of tourism or tourism-related organizations)</td>
<td>Identification of several indicators of the opportunities and some barriers for inter-destination collaboration between Opatija and Portorož as close substitutes.</td>
<td>Cooperative attitude based on tourism product compatibility as starting point for innovative tourism offer especially for distant markets aiming to overcome the seasonality</td>
<td>Opatija (CRO) and Portorož (SLO)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Weidenfeld, (2013)</td>
<td>Conceptual framework</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>The role of tourism knowledge transfer and innovation in the context of European cross border regional innovation systems</td>
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To sum up, we might assume that stakeholders’ innovative activities and routines do not *a priori* represent a success and fruitful cooperation among the destinations making them forthrightly more competitive. In some cases, cooperation brings an advantage for destinations but there are examples where the disagreements, lack of trust, and competition between the stakeholders, rather than cooperation interfere joint development (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). Nevertheless, little or no cooperation can limit the potentials of innovative activities performed by tourism stakeholders and therefore consequently has negative impact on their competitiveness (Fuglsang, Sørensen, Jørgensen Nordli, 2016; Baggio & Cooper, 2010).

Within the tourism literature, the destination competitiveness presents one of the critical fields of research. There are several definitions and interpretations of destination competitiveness, which are not in accordance with one another. According to Dwyer and Kim (2003), this is a result of similar challenges with understanding the concept (Żemła, 2014). Several models present the complexity of the destination competitiveness concept. In year, 2003 Ritchie and Crouch presented a Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness with five key determinants: namely destination policy, planning and development, destination management, core resources and attractors, and supporting factors and resources.
Crouch (2007) presented three groups of destination competitiveness studies:

- the competitive positions of specific destinations,
- the particular aspects of destination competitiveness,
- general models of destination competitiveness.

Other competitiveness models are presented in the studies of Dwyer and Kim (2003); Heath (2003); Mazanec, Wöber and Zins (2007); Ritchie and Crouch (2003) etc. Żemla (2010, p. 249) presented the concept of the destination competitiveness that is “often developed in approach typical for regional economics and is connected with the ability to create a competitive offer or, even more broadly to develop tourism in a sustainable way”. With awareness of fierce competition on the tourism market, the same author stress that this is not, the only approach to this concept and therefore he proposes reaching out for more entrepreneurial approach.

Undoubtedly, the destination competitiveness nowadays indicates success on the tourism market aligned with sustainable guidelines and thus demands from the destination management continuous sustainable valorization of tourist resources. Cross-border inter-destination collaboration might provide an innovative potential or an approach for further sustainable tourism development in regions where there are motives and trust of destination stakeholders. Their coordinated collaboration might lead to competitive positions on the tourism market generating innovative destination products and solutions as a corollary of knowledge transfer and innovative initiatives.

CONCLUSION

This paper consider cross-border inter-destination collaboration as an opportunity for generating innovative solutions and initiatives regarding destination product quality and competitive position within the tourism market. Among numerous advantages and benefits, cross-border inter-destination collaboration also challenges destination management with some hindrances mostly concerning collaboration among the stakeholders. Those can be overcome by subtle destination management orchestration considering interests and motives from both sides within the inter-destination partnership.

Some limitations of this paper derive from its type, as it is a literature review, nonetheless it represents a systematic overview of recent research results from the field and make solid base for further empirical research.

REFERENCES


