

## Research Article

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# Who Are the Domestic Creative Tourists in Slovakia? Implications from a Cluster-Based Demand Analysis

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**Abstract:** In recent years, creative tourism has become one of the most dynamically developing tourism products in global tourism. Its role in Slovakia is also important, although it has not been deeply explored. Recognising this research gap, the authors aimed to understand better the place and role of creative tourism in Slovakia. After elaborating the primary results of a demand-based questionnaire survey, the study presents a cluster-based creative tourist characterisation approach where the authors make an attempt to establish the characteristic segments of creative tourism demand in Slovakia from the point of view of domestic consumers. The primary and consumer segmentation results demonstrate that the place and role of creative tourism as a tourism product should be considered important in terms of the tourism supply of the country and also from the point of view of consumer attitudes and habits. However, the development of this product is very limited and further progress is needed to enhance the opportunities surrounding this complex tourism product. The authors believe that cluster-based consumer segmentation provides an opportunity and an approach to realise the most important market segments for creative tourism. Product development efforts can thus be optimised around this new knowledge as well.

**Keywords:** Creative tourism; Slovakia; demand side; domestic tourists; questionnaire survey; clustering; product development

## 1 Introduction

Due to the international tourism trends of the past two decades, the development and formation of cultural tourism have created ever newer segments of demand and thus an increased fragmentation of cultural tourism. “One of the effects of the rapid growth in cultural tourism in recent decades has been a diversification of cultural tourism demand and the appearance of many ‘new’ forms of tourism within the general cultural tourism field” (Richards, 2002, p. 229).

Today, creativity is becoming the main ingredient of increasing economic growth, innovation support, and the development of individual abilities and creative places. In 2009, the European Union declared a Year of Creativity and Innovation to raise awareness among the general public about the importance of creativity and its contribution to the economic and social development of Europe as a knowledge society (Decision No. 1350/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, 2008).

The role of creativity in generating social and economic development of regions worldwide has caught the attention of many experts in a wide range of fields, one of which is certainly tourism. The linkage between creativity and tourism has been the subject of foreign research and projects since the last decade of the 20th century. The term *creative tourism* first appeared in the scientific literature as early as 1993 in the work of Pearce and Butler (Richards, 2011), but the first official definition was published only at the beginning of the new millennium in the work of Richards and Raymond (2000). Their concept of creative tourism was originally launched as tourism associated with artistic activities and creative experiences, provided to visitors mainly by local creative artists and entrepreneurs.

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neers in the form of creative workshops in the holiday destination. That is considered creative tourism 1.0, the first of four phases of creative tourism evolution, as described by Duxbury and Richards (2019).

Recognising the importance of creative tourism as a tourism product and a research gap in the study of this topic, we launched research to better understand the place and role of creative tourism in Slovakia. The research aim of the article is the examination of domestic tourists' interest in and preferences for creative tourism in Slovakia. We also looked to set up the clustering of creative tourists. We believe that cluster-based consumer segmentation provides an opportunity and an approach to realise the most important market segments for creative tourism. Product development efforts can thus be optimised around this new knowledge as well.

Based on the previously mentioned content, the article first intends to give an introduction to the theoretical background of creative tourism. We then examine the present state and role of the creative tourism policy of Slovakia. Following the methodology section, we present the results of the clustering process. We then provide the conclusions, research implications, and limitations of the research, together with possible future research directions.

## 2 Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Creative Tourism, Creative Turn: Formation and Trends

In cultural tourism, the new destination culture-based tourism products should add value to local communities, protect the environment, and create local benefits, providing visitors an authentic travel experience (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2018). For visitors with a desire for authenticity, destinations should provide satisfaction, often associated with an interactive knowledge of the local culture, the daily life of local people, and their traditions and customs (Franco & Meneses, 2020). This new phenomenon on the demand side requires a changing approach to the development of cultural tourism products on the supply side. Contemporary tourism developments have brought new directions for the use of creativity with links to cultural and creative industries, leading to the emergence of creative tourism as a reconception of cultural tourism (Jelinčić & Žuvela, 2012).

As a result of the shift of cultural tourism, a new term appeared in the beginning of the 2000s, first used by Richards and Raymond (2000), *creative tourism*. Their definition for creative tourism was “Tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken” (p. 18).

Since the 2000s, the terms *creative culture* and *creative tourism* have been more widely used in cultural tourism trends research and analysis. UNESCO's (2006) working definition of creative tourism is the following: “travel directed towards an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place. It provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture.”

From the point of view of regional development, it is understood as a source of competitive advantage for cities (Landry, 2008; Catalani, 2013) and tourism destinations (Richards & Wilson, 2006). Just as important, it is a key factor in attracting members of the creative class (Florida, 2019) and creative tourists (Tan et al., 2014) over other locations. It is also a fundamental means for industry and policy decision-makers to adopt and implement more user-centred strategies (less about making things and more about providing a service; KEA European Affairs, 2009). Creativity, innovation, and knowledge are characteristic assets of this new era. The growing relationship between creativity and territory led to the building of a creative ecosystem, an environment of excellence based on three interlinked components: (1) economy, or creative industries; (2) place, or creative spaces; and (3) people, or creative talent (INTELI, 2011).

In tourism, creativity is primarily linked with delivering authentic and unique tourism experiences to visitors, provided in the concept of cocreation between visitors and hosts in tourism destinations (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Tan et al., 2013), and these experiences are characteristic of the destinations using their endogenous creative capital (Richards & Wilson, 2006). Creativity of tourism destinations is generally understood not only as an economic tool for creating economic values and benefits for local stakeholders, but also as a creator of cultural values that contribute to the distinctive living culture of the destination. In tourism, there has been a significant turn in the use of creativity and creative industries in the last 20 years. The strong relationship of the tourism and creative industries has been recognised by many researchers (Richards, 2011; Long, 2017), cultural and tourism prac-

tioners, and policymakers (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009, 2014).

Creativity also plays important role in the tourism value creation process (Richards, 2020b), when it helps to build capacity in the cultural and tourism economy sectors of the destination (Long, 2017). Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009) in this context viewed tourism as a holistic network of visitors and stakeholders connected in experiential environments that will contribute to the uniqueness and authenticity of the tourism destination. Creativity is a typical feature of alternative forms of tourism (ecotourism, sustainable tourism, nature-based tourism, geo-tourism, gastronomy and wine tourism, creative tourism, etc.), whereby local communities create creative tourism travel packages in cooperation with tourism organisations (Virginija, 2016). Tourism destinations are utilising intangible creative resources and incorporating everyday life and popular culture into unique tourist products (Ilinčić, 2014).

Based on the information presented, we can state that the most recent trends in cultural tourism increasingly investigate the topic of creative tourism (Richards, 2002). Of course, the link between creativity and culture is obvious and it is also natural that those people who are involved in creative industries (artists or professionals who are active in cultural and creative industries) will be in some way linked to culture and cultural tourism as well (Richards & Marques, 2012; Palenčíková *et al.*, 2016). As a driving force of the ever developing and diversifying area of cultural tourism, “culture is taken to encompass traditional cultural and artistic activities (performing arts, visual arts, cultural heritage and literature) as well as cultural industries (printed works, multimedia, the press, cinema, audiovisual and phonographic productions, craft, design, and cultural tourism)” (KEA European Affairs, 2009, p. 21).

The major driving factor in the formation of creative tourism was that tourists wanted to discover more during their travels, so participation and authenticity became the key words, including participation in different activities and acquisition of authentic experiences (Coccosis, 2008; Virginija, 2016). To meet this demand, tourism destinations need to provide more authentic and genuine experiences.

We can state that travellers’ need to participate, learn, and experience more during their travels has increased:

The shift from observation to immersion in travel has, and will continue to, grow the understanding and appreciation of cultural tourism in its broader (symbiotically tangible and intangible) sense. This is magnified in emerging destinations (espe-

cially the Asian region) which offer, and are overtly positioning, culture as one of their key differentiators and reasons for superior experience delivery. Cultural Tourism allows destinations which may be lacking in hard infrastructure to compete not just effectively, but assertively and sustainably, with their soft infrastructure offerings, i.e., inviting culture, heritage and community. (UNWTO, 2018, p. 52)

As Richards and Marques (2012, p. 4) enumerated, creative tourism can be:

- A means of involving tourists in the creative life of the destination.
- A creative means of using existing resources.
- A means of strengthening identity and distinctiveness.
- A form of self-expression and discovery.
- A form of edutainment—education as self-realisation and entertainment.
- A source of “atmosphere” for places.
- A source for re-creating and reviving places.

With the appearance and advance of the Internet and the digital era in tourism, creative experiences began to be used in destination marketing to attract visitors to the destination (Richards, 2018; Florida, 2019). In this second phase, creative tourism 2.0, the concept started to be anchored in the destination and linked with local culture, environment, and people. Based on the collaboration among various stakeholders in the destination, creative tourism started to serve first as a platform or tool for gaining economic and social development and benefits for the local community, leading to improvements in the well-being and quality of life of local communities. Later, influenced by the negative impacts of mass tourism on many popular cultural destinations in the world, it began to be perceived as a suitable tool for achieving destination sustainability (Coccosis, 2008; Chatkaewnapanon & Kelly, 2019).

The focus of the destinations on protecting their intangible cultural assets led to the creation of creative places in connection with creative economy enterprises, and to wider offerings of active as well as passive creative experiences to visitors (creative tourism 3.0; Richards, 2018; Duxbury & Richards, 2019). Influenced by changes in strategies of tourism destinations toward creative tourism development, the original concept of creative tourism was revised and redefined in the context of creative economy and creative industries development as, “knowledge based creative activities that link producers, consumers and places by utilising technology, talent or skill to generate meaningful intangible cultural products, creative content and experiences” (OECD, 2014, p. 7).

Destinations specialising in creative activities and experiences are attractive for the mobile creative class, both creative entrepreneurs and visitors. In this context, Duxbury and Richards (2019) pointed to the importance of deeply embedding place specificity in creative tourism activities and experiences and the importance of networks as a means to generate creative experiences. A highly networked environment in tourism destinations enables tourists to create peer-to-peer relations with local creative people (artists, craftsmen, etc.) and to achieve cocreation of their creative experiences. This is the characteristic feature of creative tourism 4.0. Today, all four phases of creative tourism appear in tourism destinations, depending on the strategy and vision for creative tourism development in a particular destination.

The recent research directions in creative tourism present increasingly diverse approaches. One of these directions explores the connection between cities and creative tourism (Qiang Li & Kovacs, 2021) and also creative place making (Richards, 2020a). Case-study-based investigations were also introduced using a context mapping approach by Sarantou et al. (2021), where a practical and flexible mapping tool was presented that can be expanded and applied by designers for practical mapping activities. More closely related to the topic and objective of this article, profiling of creative tourism consumers has become a research trend recently. Remoaldo et al. (2020) used clustering methods of participants in creative tourism activities in their case-study-based research, in which they provided first major study at the national and international levels to investigate and segment the creative tourism market for activities in small and medium-sized cities and rural areas.

## 2.2 The State and Role of Creative Tourism Policy in Slovakia

The interest in the emerging field of creative industries and their socioeconomic spillovers can be traced in Slovakia beginning in the 2010s. The first mentions of fostering creativity and creating synergies among culture, education, and industry at the national level appear in the government's programme for 2010 through 2014. Subsequently, based on cooperation with the British Council, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (2011) released the report "Principles of the Concept for Support of the Cultural and Creative Industry in the Slovak Republic." The document contains initial definitions of the creative industries, the cultural industries, the creative economy, the creative class, and so on, adapted to Slovak condi-

tions and based on a comparison of applied experiences of particular European countries (especially the United Kingdom, Germany, and France), as well as theoretical concepts of the creative industry, namely the British Ministry of Culture (DCMS), the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) model, and the concentric circles model (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 2011). At the same time, it defines for the first time the structure of the creative industry in Slovakia, consisting of 19 separate categories: architecture; theatre; film and video; hardware and related services; support services; music; information and communication technologies; communication media; cultural heritage and natural heritage; literature and book market; fashion industry; multimedia industry; memory institutions; advertising industry; crafts; software; art market; visual art; and entertainment industry.

Also, for the first time, the document states that tourism is essential for the cultural and creative industries and is an integral part of them. In terms of economic links between the creative industries and tourism, four areas closely related to cultural and creative tourism were identified: cultural and natural heritage, memory institutions, crafts, and the so-called entertainment industry (Mišúnová, 2012; Madudová, 2015). However, the linkages between creative activities and accommodation facilities are considered the starting point for creating added value resulting from the complementary relationship between the two sectors. The share of creative industries in tourism was identified according to the tourism satellite account indirectly as the share of other services in tourism (culture, recreation, other entertainment services, and other services).

In 2014, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic elaborated the Strategy for the Development of the Creative Industry in the Slovak Republic, in which the creative industries are defined as "a set of industries that are based on the use of the results of intellectual creative activity in the field of art, culture and other industries. Its essence is business activities, based on individual creativity, skills, and talent. These activities have the potential to create capital and jobs by use of intellectual property" (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 2014).

The last and most important step for defining the economic importance and position of the cultural and creative industries and related industries in the Slovak economy was the introduction of a satellite account of culture and creative industries in 2019, initiated by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Based on the background literature, the market segmentation theory (Claycamp & Massy, 1968), and the pre-

sented research aim, we set forth the following research hypothesis: Although a relatively small market segment, the investigation of the attitudes and customer behaviour of Slovakian domestic creative tourists presents an opportunity to create different consumer segments based on clustering methods.

### 3 Methodology

The scientific goal of the research was to carry out complex investigations to map the conditions of creative tourism in Slovakia and to identify the possibilities for its further development in connection with the development of creative sectors and creative industries in the regions of Slovakia. As part of this research, this article intends to demonstrate our results based on the unfolding and enhanced understanding of the domestic demand.

The necessary information was collected both from primary and secondary sources. The starting point was a review of the relevant domestic and foreign literature, as well as official domestic and foreign electronic documents as current secondary sources of information with regard to the theoretical conceptualisation and practical formulation of the initial phase of creative tourism development. Theoretical research methods contained analysis (primary and secondary sources of data), synthesis, induction, deduction (evaluation of the collected data), comparison (comparing findings of the primary research, comparison with the results of research conducted abroad) and analogy, for the lack of knowledge about creative tourism development.

Primary data for this publication were questionnaire responses from domestic visitors (investigating the current state of demand for creative tourism in Slovakia and setting up the taxonomy of creative visitors). The primary research was carried out in 2018 and 2019. For the questionnaire, a pre-test was developed to test the intelligibility of the questions with a selected sample of respondents.

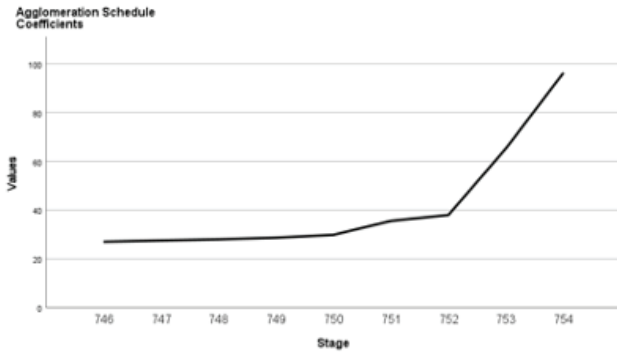
The questionnaire was designed to be anonymous and its aim was to determine the current interests of the inhabitants of Slovakia in creative tourism and their previous experience with the consumption of tourism services that have a creative character. The questionnaire was divided into five sections (general awareness of the concept of creative tourism, previous experience, reasons for the lack of experience with creative tourism, demand preferences for creative tourism, and sociodemographic data of respondents) and contained a total of 26 questions. As

Slovakia is mostly a rural country with a smaller share of urbanised areas (of 2,890 settlements, there are 2,752 rural municipalities [95.2%] and 138 towns [4.8%]; the ratio of urban to rural population is 54.4%:45.6%), the collection of answers was carried out in all local governing regions of Slovakia and mainly in popular tourist resorts. These tourist sites provide a wide range of creative and cultural activities (events, workshops) that integrate authentic local culture. The on-site survey took place during the spring and summer seasons of 2019 (April–September) on both weekdays and weekends. Self-administered questionnaires were systematically distributed to individuals who visited the study areas. A total of 876 questionnaires were collected in 2019.

First, descriptive statistics were applied to identify the basic characteristics of the collected sample. We later carried out cluster analysis to map the motivations of the different groups and segments of the respondents during their creative free-time activities. As for the first step of the cluster analysis, to filter the general respondent's willingness, we subtracted the mean value of the agreement with the statements of the questionnaire from the measure of the agreement with the particular statement. We increased the dissipation of the personal evaluations with this method, and so the effectiveness of the original Likert scales. The *k*-means clustering analysis proved to be the most effective solution for the creation of the groups with different preferences, taking into consideration the size of the sample as well. Before that, to determine the ideal numbers for the groups, we carried out a hierarchical cluster analysis with Ward's hierarchical clustering method. Based on the resulting agglomeration schedule and dendrogram, the ideal number of groups was four.

Using this method, where a large difference between the coefficients of two consecutive clustering stages was found in the agglomeration schedule, the hierarchical clustering was finished. By this process, the final clusters being merged are increasing in heterogeneity, but the clusters do not become too dissimilar. There is a jump in the coefficient values between stages 752 and 753, which determines that the ideal number of clusters is four (Figure 1). The dendrogram also supported this result, but due to its size (it contains 754 stages), we are not able to display it here.

We standardised the values of the variables involved in the cluster analysis to be able to measure the anomaly from the mean values. They were then included into a *k*-means clustering analysis where the number of the groups to be formed was set to four. Based on the analysis of variance (ANOVA) table of the *k*-means cluster analysis, all 10 chosen variables had a significant impact on deter-



**Figure 1:** Agglomeration schedule coefficients in the case of the last nine stages of the hierarchical clustering.

mining the clusters (in all cases the  $p$ -value was lower than 0.001). It meant that no further modification was needed in connection with the variables involved in the  $k$ -means cluster analysis. Consequently, the characteristics of the created groups could be analysed.

Based on their characteristics we assigned names for the groups with the aim of illustrating their main characteristics. The cluster centres of the created groups and their ratio within the sample is presented in Figure 2. To determine the created clusters as efficiently as possible, we separately analysed whether we could reveal statistically justifiable variations in the questions of our questionnaire that were not used for the group determination. For the verification of such differences, due to the nominal characteristics of the data, we used a chi-square test along with the 5% significance limit value that is generally accepted in the social sciences. IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and Microsoft Excel 2016 software were used for data processing.

## 4 Results

During the survey, the research group received 876 responses, out of which 41.44% were from males and 58.56% were from females. The age distribution was split rather proportionally. According to education level, most of the respondents had an upper secondary education ending examinations (43.38%), followed by having master's degree (22.49%) and upper secondary vocational education (not ending with examinations; 11.99%). The distribution of the respondents was well balanced according to economic activity, as the greatest number of respondents were employees (46%), followed by students (26%) and retired persons (13%). Self-employed entrepreneurs, unemployed workers, and homemakers (currently on maternity or paternity leave) were also included. Of

course, regional distribution is also an important factor to achieve a more representative sample. Our respondents represented all regions of Slovakia and a small number of foreign citizens as well (0.7%). The greatest group of respondents were from the Nitra region (22%), followed by the Košice region (15%), Trnava (15%), Banská Bystrica (14%), Prešov (13%), and Trenčín (12%). The fewest responses were collected in the Bratislava (6%) and Žilina (3%) regions (Table 1).

First the activities tourists consider the most creative are revealed. The related data from the questionnaire were measured and analysed mostly by mean rank and Mann–Whitney test to determine the average rank of creative activities. We assumed that the most preferred creative activities by respondents were courses and workshops of traditional crafts and folk art. This hypothesis was verified at a significance level of 0.05. Based on the results (Table 2) we confirmed this hypothesis.

This finding corresponds with the general desire of creative tourists for authentic and transformative experiences, as crafts and folk art are strongly tied to traditional locations. Therefore, they are offered mainly in traditional rural or peripheral areas, providing job opportunities for local craftsmen, artisans, and creative entrepreneurs. According to the results of the cluster analysis, events connected with crafts and folk art are attractive for tourists who wish to relax during their holiday. At the same time, they are unique activities that can be attended only at the given destination.

Next, we provide an interpretation of the results of the cluster-based analyses based on the results of a questionnaire survey on the demand side of the Slovakian population intending to survey consumer habits and trends related to creative tourism.

## 5 Discussion

As shown in Figure 2, the cluster entitled “wishing to learn new things” included travellers who take part in creative leisure activities and events during their holidays because they intend to try new things on an above-average level. They also enjoy activities that provide a challenge. They also strongly agreed that they like to be involved in such activities and events because they can gain new skills and knowledge and they can spend constructive time with their family and friends. These respondents were less motivated by forgetting about their everyday routines and they are also less motivated by activities that are unique and can be practiced at one certain place. Women are

**Table 1:** Summary of the general data of the respondents of the questionnaire survey.

<b>Gender</b>			<b>Economic activity</b>		
	Person	% (n=876)		Person	% (n=876)
Male	363	41,44%	Student	226	25,80%
Female	513	58,56%	Employed for wages	405	46,23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>100,00%</b>	Self-employed	87	9,93%
			Unemployed	17	1,94%
			Homemaker/ currently on maternity/ paternity leave	20	2,28%
			Retired	112	12,79%
			Unable to work	9	1,03%
			<b>Total</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>100,00%</b>
<b>Age</b>			<b>Region of dwelling place</b>		
	Person	% (n=876)		Person	% (n=876)
Between 15 - 20 years of age	109	12%	Bratislava	53	6,05%
Between 21 - 35 years of age	298	34,02%	Trnava	129	14,73%
Between 36 - 55 years of age	253	28,88%	Trenčín	106	12,10%
Between 56 - 75 years of age	216	24,66%	Žilina	28	3,20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>100,00%</b>	Nitra	191	21,80%
			Banská Bystrica	123	14,04%
			Prešov	113	12,90%
			Košice	130	14,84%
			Foreign citizen	3	0,34%
			<b>Total</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>100,00%</b>
<b>Highest achieved education level</b>					
	Person	% (n=876)			
2nd grade of primary education (lower secondary education)	73	8,33%			
Upper secondary vocational education (not ending with school leaving examination)	105	11,99%			
Upper secondary education ending with school leaving examination	380	43,38%			
Post-secondary vocational education	24	2,74%			
Bachelor's degree	74	8,45%			
Master's degree	197	22,49%			
Doctoral degree or other, higher academic degree	23	2,63%			
<b>Total</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>100,00%</b>			

**Table 2:** The average ranking of creative events by respondents.

Creative activities	Order	Mean rank
Traditional events of crafts and folk art	2	1.73
Courses and workshops of traditional crafts and folk art	1	1.71
Gastronomic events with the topic of cooking local dishes and food	4	1.84
Traditional and local food cooking courses and workshops	5	1.91
Folklore events	6	1.97
Stage art workshops	7	2.07
Visual arts workshops	5	1.91
Creative workshops for children	3	1.78
Courses and workshops of traditional ecological products and recycling	8	2.21



**Figure 2:** The characteristics of the created clusters based on deviation of the answers from the mean values of the question, “What is your motivation to participate in creative activities during your holiday?”

more highly represented in this cluster compared to the other clusters.

According to the mean values of the complete sample, this cluster includes in a greater ratio those who once or twice already tried some creative leisure time activities or took part in events during their holidays, although taking part in more than five such occasions in their lifetime is not characteristic at all. This is understandable because the members of this cluster try these activities due to the attraction of novel things and newness. Taking into consideration their regional allocation, they are represented in a higher proportion from the Trnava, Trenčín, Žilina, Nitra, and Banská Bystrica regions. Based on occupation, active earners are overrepresented in this group, which is advantageous from the point of view of the potential demand. It is also proved by our results that, compared to the other groups, the members of this cluster intend to spend between 31 and 50 euros for a two-hour creative activity or event in a significantly higher ratio during their holidays.

The second cluster of our analysis includes those “wishing to relax and/or travel actively”, who are strongly motivated to take part in creative leisure activities or events because they wholeheartedly try and learn new things and they like activities that present a challenge for them.

They also like to take part in activities that make their holidays unique, and they like to relax and forget about their everyday routines during creative activities. In line with this, the members of this cluster were in below-average agreement with the statement that they take part in such activities and events to get to know the local culture and traditions. They also agreed below average with the motivation to spend their time sensibly with family and friends. This cluster, compared to the other groups, was a younger group where males and students were overrepresented, as were those who are active earners. The highest ration of those in this cluster tried some creative activities or events during their holidays. Their expected spending on these activities, however, was average. Nevertheless, from the point of view of business, they represent an attractive group because they have a high willingness to try creative activities and events during their holidays. From the point of view of regional allocation, they are highly representative of the Bratislava, Trnava, and Košice regions.

The third identified cluster was called “wishing to relax” because these individuals mainly take part in leisure and free-time activities during their holiday because they wish to relax and forget about their everyday routine. It is also motivating for them to spend their free time with their family and friends. Harmonising with this, and contrary to



the other groups, members of this group do not take part in activities and events to try out and learn new things or because they would like things that are challenging for them. Out of the analysed four groups, the members of this group are definitely the oldest, which also provides an explanation for their previously mentioned habits. In terms of gender differences, males are overrepresented here. The highest ratio of those who never took part in creative and leisure activities during their holidays were identified in this cluster. The ratio is also the highest in this cluster of those who would want to spend less on creative activities (50% of this cluster indicated that they are willing to spend up to 15 euros for such activities), so from the point of view of business purposes, this group is the least attractive.

The last identified cluster was labelled “culture lovers”. The members of this group are motivated to take part in creative free-time activities and events and to get to know and understand the local culture and traditions more than the members of the other clusters. They also strongly prefer unique activities that can be practiced only at some particular locations. In keeping with this, they are less motivated by relaxing and forgetting about their daily routine. This cluster has the highest ratio—at least three times more—of respondents who took part in some creative free-time activities and events. It is also true, though, that they are not willing to spend more than the average for such activities. This is a younger group, as this cluster has the highest ratio of those less than 20 years old and those who are students. Taking into consideration dwelling place and gender, they represent an average group. From the point of view of business purposes, they could constitute an important group because, even if they spend only at an average level, the ratio of those who took part at least three times in creative leisure activities and events during their holidays is high. They are thus the most dedicated group to such activities.

Based on the results, our research hypothesis can be accepted. Accordingly, revealing the attitudes and customer behaviours of Slovakian domestic creative tourists provides an opportunity to create different consumer segments based on clustering methods. On the one hand, it has been proven by the ANOVA table of the *k*-means clustering, which showed that all 10 attitude variables about creative tourism had a significant impact in determining the clusters. On the other hand, the final clusters significantly differ from each other in their customer behaviour characteristics, which is proof of their heterogeneity in their attitudes toward creative tourism.

## 6 Conclusions

This research intended to provide an introduction to the findings of primary results and the cluster analysis of the demand side of creative tourism in Slovakia. This exploratory research filled a gap in the survey of creative tourism in the country as, according to our knowledge, no such comprehensive research has previously been carried out in Slovakia. As mentioned in the literature review, where Remoaldo et al. (2020) provided the first major study at the national and international levels to investigate and segment the creative tourism market for activities in small and medium-sized cities and rural areas, this article is the first in profiling domestic creative tourists in Slovakia.

The research findings were supported by the results of the literature review; namely, creative tourism appears to be a rather new niche segment for cultural tourism not just on the international scene, but in Slovakia as well, a country rich in intangible cultural heritage and creative suppliers and demand that are considered basic assets for the development of creative tourism. Because we used a well-known methodology, the theoretical contributions are limited but the presented results provide further information on market segmentation. The practical implications of this research support the development of creative tourism in Slovakia, including aspects such as the development of creativity and atmosphere in destinations, the attraction of creative people, and growth in visitor numbers. In the future, it is likely that there will be more synergies between tourism and culture, particularly in the area of the creative industries and consumption of local or everyday culture. This will also generate new challenges, though, particularly in terms of sustainability and visitor management in tourism destinations with respect to local communities.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis, in parallel with newly emerging economic challenges, have hit the culture, creative, and tourism industries equally, causing a loss of visitors overnight. Global forecasts suggest that their return will be a slow procedure. In practice, more tourism and culture stakeholders will be involved in the process of cocreation of creative tourism products and creative experiences. The role of local communities as part of the cultural tourism experience will expand dramatically. The broadening connection between culture, creative industries, and tourism could also generate a wider range of benefits for all sectors and local communities.

Our results demonstrate that the role of creative tourism as a tourism product should be considered important in terms of the tourism supply of the country and also from the point of view of consumer attitudes and habits.

The development of this product is very limited, however, and further progress is needed to enhance the opportunities provided by this complex tourism product. We distinguished four major groups of creative tourism consumers. A proposed national creative tourism strategy could rely on this information, especially in the development and planning of this tourism product.

From the point of view of the research hypothesis, we proved that the place and role of creative tourism as a tourism product should be handled as an important market segment in the country, as confirmed by the market segmentation results and the revealed demand clusters.

The limitation of the study is based on the targeted sample size. Although we reached a high sample size during the field work, it cannot be considered a representative multitude.

For further research, the authors would carry on with a representative sampling and a research design focusing on the possible creation of value chains in Slovakia connected to creative tourism. The design and development of such planning will be able to create practical results both from the point of view of the benefits of the local entrepreneurs, regional development, economic contribution (both at the local, regional and national level) and the satisfaction of the new tourist demand in Slovakia.

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