

“OUTPACE”: how to innovate tourism through pop culture?

The increased popularity of Croatian city Dubrovnik after its appearance in HBO’s “Game of Thrones” or the global attention drawn to Lithuania, as a filming spot of the HBO’s miniseries “Chernobyl” – these are just a few illustrations of popular culture influence on a particular tourist attraction. This interest in tourist venues spurred by popular culture (films, TV series, books, music) serves as an essential part of the global economy, and to some tourism destinations is even vital nowadays.

Yet, this pop culture incentive for a particular tourist destination may be short-lived. Usually, companies in the tourism sector provide excellent traditional services but face difficulties in mastering the benefits and opportunities brought by the pop culture.

Thus, the “Erasmus+” project “Innovating tourism through pop culture” (“OUTPACE”) seeks to provide tourism and creative industry educators, development stakeholders and entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills to capitalise on pop culture trends.

Digital skills and the tourism industry

The “OUTPACE” project harnesses the power of film-induced tourism and popular culture to develop a new, highly innovative pedagogy to support the acquisition of transferable entrepreneurial and digital skills.

The methodologies and tools developed through the “OUTPACE” project are designed to expand the number of tourism companies developing innovative products and services. Hence, the innovative tourism companies will create a more market-responsive and dynamic regional tourism economy.

However, the popularity of pop culture-driven tourism is highly dependent on the use of innovative digital technologies (such as virtual or augmented reality). Pop culture tourists, unlike traditional tourists, prefer immersive, aspirational, and emotional based experiences. These complex tourist motives lead to a growing need for the latest technologies and the digitisation of the tourism sector. Therefore, the project’s training methodology responds to the shortage of innovation applied in the tourism industry.

“The “OUTPACE” project consortium, representing Lithuania, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Ireland and Sweden, coordinated by Vilnius Gediminas technical university, develops innovative open educational resources for teachers and lecturers,” says Vilma Puriene, the “OUTPACE” project manager and director of the Knowledge and Technology Transfer Centre of Vilnius Gediminas technical university. “These open educational resources will bring interactivity and advanced digital learning to the fore for the teaching community,” she adds.

The innovative topic

The innovation of the project’s idea reflects on a higher education institution’s transition from academic research on pop culture tourism into the practical application in a brand-new curriculum. Therefore, the educational resources combine market opportunity with the need for innovation and entrepreneurship: idea generation, problem-solving, critical thinking, and

cross-cultural communication. Moreover, by tackling regional skills gaps, the project also stimulates regional tourism economies as key employment creators.

Towards innovative tourism: methodologies and resources

The project's results – intellectual outputs, consist of regional actions plans, resource pack, open education resources, and innovators' app.

The Pop Culture Tourism Alliances & Actions Plans seeks to bring together tourism and creative/cultural industries stakeholders to analyse regional skills gaps and create an action plan for ongoing collaboration. Therefore, the resource pack aims to introduce stakeholders to the concept of Pop Culture Tourism and its ability to transform regional tourism economies. Alongside the idea of training a new generation of innovative tourism sector creators, the open educational resources are tailored to enable educational institutions and business support organisations to adopt a systematic approach to training learners. Finally, the Pop Culture Tourism Innovators' App will give direct access to training and collective learning for educators, students and entrepreneurs interested in moving into tourism and digital content through creative industries.

The project targets higher education institutions, the tourism industry and small and medium creative enterprises, business development and vocational education organisations, and business management and tourism students.

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More about the project: <https://bit.ly/3a6U6b5>