



The Transformation of Tourism Destinations in the Creative Economy Era: A Literature Review

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ABSTRAK

Transformasi destinasi wisata pada era ekonomi kreatif menjadi isu penting dalam kajian pariwisata kontemporer. Perkembangan pariwisata global semakin dipengaruhi oleh proses globalisasi, inovasi teknologi, serta perubahan preferensi wisatawan yang mengarah pada pengalaman wisata yang lebih bermakna. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana destinasi wisata mengalami transformasi dalam merespons perubahan tersebut melalui pendekatan studi literatur. Literatur yang relevan dari tahun 2018–2023 dikumpulkan dari berbagai basis data akademik dan dianalisis menggunakan metode analisis tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi destinasi wisata dipengaruhi oleh tiga faktor utama, yaitu dinamika globalisasi dan jaringan pariwisata global, pergeseran dari mass tourism menuju experience-based tourism, serta integrasi ekonomi kreatif dalam pengembangan pariwisata. Ekonomi kreatif berperan penting dalam meningkatkan daya saing destinasi melalui pengembangan produk wisata inovatif, penguatan branding berbasis budaya, serta peningkatan kualitas pengalaman wisatawan. Selain itu, kolaborasi antara pemerintah, komunitas lokal, dan pelaku industri pariwisata menjadi faktor penting dalam mendukung pembangunan pariwisata yang berkelanjutan.

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

tourism destination

transformation

creative economy

experiential tourism

The transformation of tourism destinations in the era of the creative economy has become an important topic in contemporary tourism studies. Global tourism development is increasingly influenced by globalization, technological innovation, and changes in tourist preferences toward more meaningful travel experiences. This study aims to examine how tourism destinations transform in response to these changes through a literature review approach. Relevant academic publications from 2018–2023 were collected from major databases and analyzed using thematic content analysis. The findings indicate that tourism destination transformation is driven by three major factors: the dynamics of globalization and global tourism networks, the shift from mass tourism to experience-based tourism, and the integration of creative economy activities into tourism development. The creative economy plays a crucial role in strengthening destination competitiveness through the development of innovative tourism products, cultural branding, and enhanced visitor experiences. Furthermore, collaboration among stakeholders—including local communities, government institutions, and tourism businesses—is essential to support sustainable tourism development. The study concludes that integrating creativity, culture, and innovation into tourism strategies can enhance the attractiveness and sustainability of destinations in the global tourism market.



1. Introduction

The global tourism industry has experienced significant growth and transformation in recent decades, becoming one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy. Despite its economic potential, tourism development remains highly vulnerable to global disruptions such as financial crises, geopolitical tensions, and health emergencies. The dynamics of global tourism are strongly influenced by the processes of globalization, which shape international tourist flows, destination competitiveness, and the integration of tourism markets across regions (Chiu et al., 2020; Kushnir & Brenzovych, 2019). Countries that are more integrated into global networks tend to attract higher inbound tourism flows; however, the benefits derived from tourism are not evenly distributed due to differences in infrastructure, policy responses, and regional development strategies (Bode, 2018; Pestushko et al., 2023). These conditions highlight the complexity of global tourism development and the need for adaptive strategies to maintain resilience and competitiveness in a rapidly changing environment.

In addition to globalization, technological development and the expansion of information systems have significantly reshaped the tourism industry. Digital technologies, including global distribution systems (GDS), online travel platforms, and integrated information management systems, have enhanced connectivity between tourism markets and improved the efficiency of tourism service delivery (Aamir & Atsan, 2020). Furthermore, recent studies emphasize the importance of global tourism networks, where structural characteristics such as network density, clustering, and regional centrality influence the performance of tourism destinations and the distribution of tourist flows worldwide (Zhu & Liu, 2022). These technological and network-based transformations have altered the production, marketing, and consumption patterns of tourism products, making innovation and digital integration essential for destination development.

Alongside structural transformations in the tourism system, there has also been a conceptual shift in the nature of tourism demand. Traditional mass tourism models, which emphasized standardized products, high visitor volumes, and cost efficiency, have increasingly been criticized due to their environmental and socio-cultural impacts (Carvalho et al., 2020; Dias et al., 2023). As a result, tourism has gradually shifted toward experience-based tourism, where the value of tourism lies in authentic, meaningful, and participatory experiences rather than simple consumption of attractions. Experiential tourism emphasizes emotional engagement, sensory interaction, and cultural immersion, allowing tourists to actively participate in local traditions, lifestyles, and creative activities (Alfifto et al., 2020; Yiannakou et al., 2022). This transformation reflects changing tourist preferences and highlights the importance of experiential value in shaping destination attractiveness and visitor satisfaction.

Within this evolving tourism landscape, the creative economy has emerged as a key driver for enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism destinations. The integration of creative industries—such as arts, cultural heritage, design, culinary traditions, and cultural performances—has enabled destinations to develop innovative tourism products and strengthen their unique identity in global markets (Li & Liu, 2022). Creative economy initiatives contribute to destination differentiation, support local cultural preservation, and enhance the quality of visitor experiences by fostering interaction between tourists and local communities (Fernández et al., 2020; Lesmana et al., 2022). Moreover, the development of creative tourism products has been shown to increase visitor engagement, extend tourism seasons, and generate higher economic value for local communities (Aji et al., 2023).



Despite the growing recognition of creative economy strategies in tourism development, the transformation of tourism destinations in the creative economy era remains conceptually fragmented in the academic literature. Previous studies have examined tourism globalization, experiential tourism, and creative tourism separately, but comprehensive syntheses that integrate these perspectives remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to conduct a literature review on the transformation of tourism destinations in the creative economy era by examining the key drivers, conceptual frameworks, and strategic implications identified in recent tourism research. By synthesizing existing studies, this research seeks to contribute to a clearer understanding of how tourism destinations adapt to global changes and how creative economy approaches can support sustainable and competitive tourism development.

2. Method

This study employs a literature review approach to examine the transformation of tourism destinations in the era of the creative economy. The literature review method was chosen to synthesize existing academic discussions regarding globalization, experience-based tourism, and the role of the creative economy in tourism development. Relevant scholarly publications were collected from major academic databases, including Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, focusing on studies published between 2018 and 2023 to ensure the inclusion of recent developments in tourism research. The selection process used keywords such as *tourism destination transformation*, *creative economy*, *creative tourism*, *experiential tourism*, and *destination competitiveness*. Articles were included if they discussed tourism development, creative economy integration, tourism experience, or policy implications related to destination transformation, while publications not directly related to tourism studies or lacking academic rigor were excluded.

The collected literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify key patterns, concepts, and research trends related to tourism destination transformation. The analysis process involved several stages: initial screening of abstracts and keywords, classification of selected studies into thematic categories, and synthesis of findings across different research contexts. Based on this process, the literature was organized into three main analytical themes: (1) globalization and global tourism dynamics, (2) the shift toward experience-based tourism, and (3) the role of the creative economy in enhancing destination competitiveness. This thematic synthesis enables a comprehensive understanding of how tourism destinations evolve in response to global changes and provides a conceptual framework for interpreting the role of creative economy strategies in contemporary tourism development.

3. Result and Discussion

a. Global Tourism Dynamics and the Influence of Globalization

The development of global tourism has been strongly shaped by the process of globalization, which influences international mobility, destination competitiveness, and tourism market integration. Globalization facilitates the flow of information, capital, and people across borders, thereby increasing the connectivity of tourism markets worldwide. As a result, tourism destinations increasingly compete on a global scale, requiring them to adapt their development strategies to changing global conditions. Several studies indicate that globalization contributes positively to international tourist arrivals by improving accessibility, transportation networks, and communication systems that connect destinations with global markets (Chiu et al., 2020; Kushnir & Brenzovych, 2019).

However, the relationship between globalization and tourism development is not always linear. While countries with higher levels of globalization tend to attract more international visitors, the economic benefits of tourism are unevenly distributed due to differences in infrastructure development, governance, and policy frameworks. Bode (2018) notes that regional

structures significantly influence how destinations benefit from globalization, particularly in terms of tourism investment and destination marketing strategies. In many developing countries, tourism growth may occur without a proportional increase in local economic welfare due to limited local participation in tourism value chains.

Recent global crises have further demonstrated the vulnerability of the tourism sector. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, caused a dramatic decline in international tourist arrivals worldwide, forcing many destinations to reconsider their development strategies and focus on resilience and diversification (Pestushko et al., 2023). In this context, domestic tourism and regional tourism markets have emerged as important buffers that help destinations recover from global shocks. Studies also emphasize the importance of long-term planning and risk management strategies to mitigate future disruptions in tourism markets (Tsytko et al., 2022).

Another important dimension of globalization is the growing importance of international tourism networks. Tourism flows increasingly follow network structures formed by transportation hubs, economic ties, and cultural linkages. Destinations that occupy central positions within these networks tend to receive higher levels of international arrivals and greater tourism investment. According to Zhu & Liu (2022), tourism networks characterized by high density and strong clustering tend to enhance regional tourism performance by facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange among destinations.

Overall, globalization has transformed the structure of the tourism industry by expanding market access, intensifying competition, and encouraging innovation in tourism products and services. Nevertheless, globalization also introduces challenges such as economic inequality, environmental pressure, and cultural commodification. Therefore, tourism destinations must develop adaptive strategies that balance economic growth with social and environmental sustainability.

Table 1. Key Drivers of Global Tourism Development (2018–2023)

Author	Research Focus	Key Findings
Chiu et al.	Globalization and tourism demand	Globalization increases international tourist arrivals
Kushnir & Brenzovych	Global tourism integration	Policy responses influence tourism benefits
Bode	Regional tourism structures	Regional differences affect tourism competitiveness
Pestushko et al.	Tourism recovery after crisis	Tourism recovery requires resilience strategies
Zhu & Liu	Global tourism networks	Network structure affects tourism performance

Table 1 summarizes key studies examining the relationship between globalization and tourism development between 2018 and 2023. These studies collectively highlight that globalization not only expands tourism markets but also introduces structural inequalities and risks that must be addressed through effective policy frameworks and strategic destination management.

b. Digital Transformation and Global Tourism Networks

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed the global tourism industry. The integration of information technology into tourism operations has changed how tourism services are produced, marketed, and consumed. Online booking platforms, social media, and digital marketing tools have enabled tourism destinations to reach global audiences more efficiently than ever before (Pencarelli, 2020). This digital transformation has also

empowered tourists to access information, compare destinations, and share their experiences online, thereby influencing tourism demand patterns.

One of the most important technological developments in tourism is the emergence of global distribution systems (GDS) and integrated tourism information platforms. These systems allow airlines, hotels, and travel agencies to coordinate their services and reach international markets in real time. According to Pencarelli (2020), the use of advanced tourism information systems has increased the efficiency of tourism operations and improved the competitiveness of tourism enterprises in global markets.

At the same time, digital technology has reshaped tourism networks. Tourism flows are increasingly influenced by digital communication channels and online travel communities, which create new forms of connectivity between destinations. Zhu & Liu (2022) emphasize that tourism networks with strong digital integration tend to attract higher levels of international tourism because they enable faster information exchange and better coordination among tourism stakeholders.

The influence of digital technology extends beyond marketing and distribution. It also affects the design of tourism experiences. Many destinations now use digital technologies such as augmented reality, virtual tours, and smart tourism systems to enhance visitor experiences and improve destination management. These innovations allow tourists to interact with cultural heritage sites, museums, and natural landscapes in new and engaging ways.

Nevertheless, digital transformation also introduces new challenges for tourism destinations. Smaller destinations and rural areas often face limitations in digital infrastructure and technological capacity, which may reduce their ability to compete in global tourism markets. Furthermore, excessive reliance on digital platforms may lead to the homogenization of tourism experiences, as destinations adopt similar marketing strategies and product designs.

Table 2. Digital Technologies in Tourism Development

Technology	Application	Impact on Tourism
Global Distribution Systems	Travel booking coordination	Increased market accessibility
Social Media Platforms	Destination marketing	Higher tourist engagement
Smart Tourism Systems	Destination management	Improved visitor experiences
Virtual Reality / AR	Cultural heritage interpretation	Enhanced immersive tourism

Table 2 illustrates the major technological innovations that have influenced tourism development in recent years. These technologies contribute to the digital transformation of tourism destinations by improving marketing strategies, enhancing visitor experiences, and strengthening connectivity within global tourism networks.

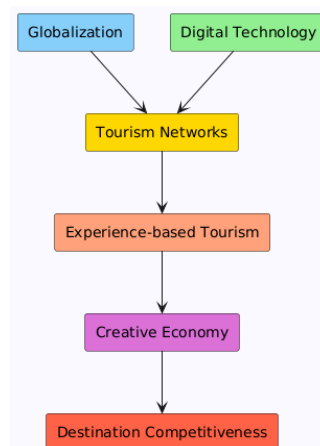


Diagram 1. Global Tourism Transformation Framework

The diagram above illustrates the conceptual framework of tourism destination transformation in the creative economy era. Globalization and digital technology serve as foundational drivers that shape tourism networks. These networks then facilitate the emergence of experience-based tourism, which emphasizes meaningful interactions between tourists and destinations. The integration of creative economy practices further enhances destination competitiveness by providing innovative tourism products and authentic cultural experiences.

c. The Shift from Mass Tourism to Experience-Based Tourism

The transition from mass tourism to experience-based tourism represents one of the most significant paradigm shifts in contemporary tourism studies. Traditional mass tourism models focused primarily on increasing visitor numbers and standardizing tourism products in order to maximize economic returns. However, such approaches have increasingly been criticized for their negative environmental impacts, cultural commodification, and lack of meaningful engagement between tourists and local communities (Carvalho et al., 2020).

In response to these criticisms, tourism researchers and practitioners have begun to emphasize the importance of experiential value in tourism development. Experience-based tourism prioritizes emotional engagement, cultural immersion, and interactive activities that allow tourists to participate actively in the life of the destination (Yiannakou et al., 2022). Rather than simply observing attractions, tourists are encouraged to interact with local communities, learn traditional skills, and participate in cultural events.

Empirical studies across different regions support the growing importance of experiential tourism. Research conducted in Spain, for example, shows that urban food markets have become important spaces for experiential tourism because they allow visitors to engage with local culinary traditions and social environments (Henne, 2018). Similarly, studies on island tourism indicate that experiential tourism can enhance visitor satisfaction and strengthen destination loyalty by offering unique and authentic cultural experiences (Pafi et al., 2020).

The rise of experiential tourism is also closely related to the increasing influence of social media. Tourists frequently share their travel experiences through digital platforms, which amplifies the visibility of destinations that offer unique and memorable experiences. As a result, tourism destinations are increasingly focusing on storytelling, cultural interpretation, and participatory activities to create distinctive tourism experiences.

Nevertheless, the shift toward experiential tourism also raises several challenges. Maintaining authenticity while accommodating increasing tourist demand can be difficult, particularly in destinations where cultural traditions are deeply rooted in local community life. If experiential tourism is not carefully managed, it may lead to cultural commodification or the loss of cultural authenticity.

Table 3. Dimensions of Tourism Experience

Dimension	Description	Example
Sensory	Physical and sensory engagement	Local cuisine, traditional crafts
Emotional	Emotional connection with place	Cultural storytelling
Cultural	Learning local traditions	Workshops with local communities
Social	Interaction with residents	Community-based tourism

Table 3 presents the main dimensions of tourism experiences identified in recent tourism literature. These dimensions highlight the multidimensional nature of experiential tourism, which integrates sensory, emotional, cultural, and social aspects to create meaningful and memorable travel experiences.

d. Creative Economy as a Driver of Destination Competitiveness

The concept of the creative economy has gained increasing attention in tourism studies as a strategic approach to enhancing destination competitiveness. The creative economy refers to

economic activities that generate value through creativity, cultural expression, and intellectual capital. In the context of tourism, creative industries such as arts, crafts, design, music, culinary traditions, and cultural festivals play a crucial role in shaping unique tourism experiences.

Research indicates that the integration of creative industries into tourism development can significantly enhance destination attractiveness. Creative tourism products provide opportunities for visitors to engage directly with local culture and participate in creative activities, thereby creating memorable travel experiences (Fernández et al., 2020). Such experiences often generate higher levels of tourist satisfaction and encourage repeat visits.

Another important contribution of the creative economy is its role in strengthening destination branding. Destinations that successfully integrate creative industries into their tourism strategies can develop distinctive identities that differentiate them from competing destinations. Studies on rural tourism in China, for example, demonstrate that creative branding strategies based on local culture can significantly enhance destination visibility and visitor satisfaction (Zheng, 2022).

Furthermore, the creative economy contributes to local economic development by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector. Local artisans, performers, and cultural entrepreneurs often benefit from tourism activities that showcase their creative products and cultural heritage. This interaction between tourism and creative industries creates a mutually reinforcing relationship that supports sustainable local development.

However, the successful implementation of creative tourism strategies requires effective collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including local communities, government institutions, tourism businesses, and cultural organizations. Without such collaboration, creative tourism initiatives may fail to achieve their full potential.

Table 4. Creative Economy Contributions to Tourism Competitiveness

Dimension	Impact on Tourism	Dimension
Creative products	Unique tourism offerings	Creative products
Cultural branding	Strong destination identity	Cultural branding
Community participation	Local economic empowerment	Community participation
Innovation	Enhanced visitor experiences	Innovation

Table 4 illustrates the major ways in which the creative economy contributes to tourism destination competitiveness. By integrating cultural creativity, community participation, and innovation, destinations can develop tourism products that are distinctive, sustainable, and capable of competing in global tourism markets.

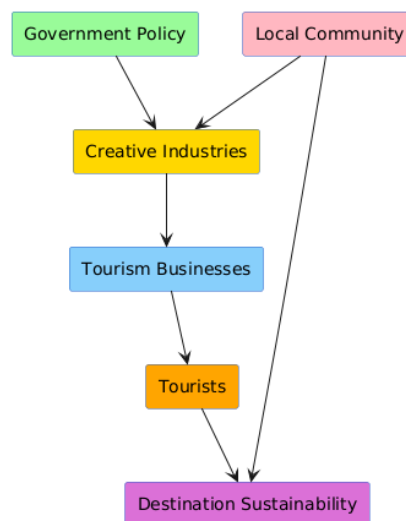


Figure 2. Creative Tourism Ecosystem

The diagram above illustrates the ecosystem of creative tourism development. The model highlights the interaction between local communities, creative industries, tourism businesses, government policies, and tourists. These stakeholders collectively contribute to sustainable tourism development by fostering innovation, cultural preservation, and economic growth within tourism destinations.

4. Conclusion

The transformation of tourism destinations in the era of the creative economy reflects broader structural changes in the global tourism industry driven by globalization, technological innovation, and evolving tourist preferences. The literature reviewed in this study indicates that globalization has expanded tourism networks and intensified competition among destinations, while digital technologies have reshaped tourism marketing, distribution systems, and visitor engagement. At the same time, the traditional mass tourism model has gradually shifted toward experience-based tourism, where tourists increasingly seek authentic, meaningful, and participatory experiences. This transformation requires tourism destinations to move beyond standardized tourism products and focus on creating immersive experiences that integrate local culture, community participation, and emotional engagement.

Furthermore, the creative economy has emerged as a key strategic driver for enhancing destination competitiveness and sustainability. By integrating creative industries such as arts, culture, culinary traditions, and local craftsmanship into tourism development, destinations can create distinctive tourism products and strengthen their branding in global markets. The literature also highlights the importance of collaborative governance involving governments, local communities, tourism businesses, and creative industry actors in developing creative tourism ecosystems. Overall, the transformation of tourism destinations in the creative economy era requires innovative policy frameworks, strong stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable management strategies to ensure that tourism development generates economic value while preserving cultural authenticity and environmental sustainability.

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