CHORAL
RESEARCH PROJECT *(max. 5 pages)*
APPLICATION FORM TO REQUEST FOR FUNDING
FOR JOINTLY SUPERVISED DOCTORAL THESIS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The valorization of cultural heritage through the co-creation of value for the innovation of tourism services in smart destinations in Romania.

SUPERVISORS

From recruiting University	First name	LAST NAME	University	Department
Supervisor **HDR or equiv.** ☐	Gheorghe	Epuran	University Transilvania from Brasov, Romania	Marketing, Tourism, Services and International Business
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Co-Supervisor **HDR or equiv.** ☐	Elodie	Manthé	Université Savoie Mont Blanc	IREGE

5 main KEYWORDS

Cultural heritage, value co-creation, soustainable tourism, digital marketing, smart destinations

ABSTRACT *(250 words max.)*

Managing the capitalization of cultural heritage for the development of tourism and smart destinations is a very topical issue in Romania. Cultural heritage it requires a multi-dimensional, multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approach to take into account all the different perspectives involved and to create an overall conceptual framework that interprets and governs the variety of interests and needs.The Romanian cultural heritage is, as research shows for other countries, a central issue, especially from the perspective of problems, such as the traditional dilemma of preservation vs. improvement. If previous researches were mainly oriented towards the dominant logic of tangible goods, in this research we propose an approach from the perspective of the interaction between tangible and intangible elements, based on the dominant logic of service, generating hypotheses that describe multiple relationships between the constructs research.

In the current context of digitalization, the (co)creation of value for innovation processes in tourism services becomes essential for participation in online communities and, implicitly, must become the first priority objective for organizations and companies in the tourism industry to develop in the online environment, as a region or tourist destination brand and/or as a company/organization brand.

Against this background, the dynamics of co-creation, service innovation and competitive advantage in smart destinations are analyzed through the adoption of information and communication technologies and by capitalizing on the moderating effects of trust.

Research aims and methodology

The aims of research is to highlight the importance of the logical approach of value co-creation and innovation in tourism services, in order to raise awareness among citizens in local communities, tourism organizations, public bodies and other stakeholders of conservation, improvement and valorisation on cultural heritage.

We propose an integrated methodological approach of Service-Dominant-Logic (SDL) and Service-Science (SS), within the general framework of the Viable-Systems-Approach (VSA) consonance model. By moving from the dominant logic of tangible goods to the relations between parties, SDL and SS emphasize the importance of collaboration in the context of interactions in the tourism market. Previous research has demonstrated that VSA integrates the two perspectives in the structure-system paradigm by explaining how collaboration occurs between viable systems. Based on this proposed integrative perspective, an innovative approach to service-based systems is defined, which allows the development of the framework for cultural heritage management, this framework based on the logic of value co-creation, according to which the actors become resource integrators in a relationship network type based on cooperation principles postulated by the VSA consonance model. A qualitative and a quantitative research will be carried out. *Necessarily, the written consent of the research participants will be requested in advance. The anonymity of research participants will be ensured.*

Relevance and added-value of the proposed research in relation to the current state of knowledge

From a scientific point of view, the relevance of the proposed theme consists, in essence, in the transition to a systemic vision of governance cultural goods through a shift in focus from structure to system, from tangible goods to services. From a practical point of view, this conceptual framework must be appreciated by decision makers as an opportunity to rethinking not the structures or competencies, but rather the grounded logic behind them the method of governing the cultural heritage.

The added value compared to previous research consists in expanding the field of interest by *co-creating value* to a greater variety of players, thus highlighting the multi-stakeholder character of cultural heritage and the need to consider creative aspects capable of ensuring, in addition to its conservation, improvement and valorization.

Interdisciplinary nature of the research together with the alignment with the CHORAL programme and complementarity expertise of the teams

The complex issue of improving and valuing cultural heritage opens the field to different disciplinary perspectives, recognizing the need to shift the focus away from the specific context technical-scientific skills towards economic, management, classical and digital marketing, social media, sociology, art and

culture. Thus, the multidisciplinary approach to cultural assets is confirmed. At the same time, it is not just about bringing new different points of view, moving from considered objective approach to an eminently subjective one, which includes other perspectives, but on the contrary, integrating the various perspectives related to the conservation, improvement and valorization of the cultural heritage into a unified one.

The approach is in full agreement with the objectives of the CHORAL program, falling under the theme of Enhancement and dissemination of cultural and natural heritage, with direct reference to tourism and valorisation, education, communication, heritage management, digitisation/digital tools, storytelling, institutions and heritage. The research team, through the expertise of its members, ensures the necessary complementarity. This results from the scientific concerns of the coordinating professors embodied in university courses, published articles and international conferences they participated in. Gheorghe Epuran is the holder of the courses Communication in international business, E-marketing and social-media mix, Marketing strategies in tourism. He coordinated doctoral theses in tourism, published research results in WOS indexed journals and in other international databases, regarding organic growth in tourism, permaculture and downshifting - sources of sustainable tourism development in rural areas, Innovative forms of economy and sustainable urban development- sharing tourism, a conceptual framework of consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors in the tourism context, From 4P's to 4 E's–How to avoid the risk of unbalancing the marketing mix in today's hotel businesses, Responsible Consumption-Source of Competitive Advantages and Solution for Tourist Protection, co-creation and others.

Complementary, Elodie Manthé hold a PhD in Marketing and is Associate Professor at USMB – France for four years. She carried out research in collaborative finance, collaborative donation and contributive tourism from a consumer point of view (i.e. what are the trigger and consequences of tourist charitable contribution to a destination). Her research has been published in top-rated Journal such as Entrepreneurship Theory and Practices and Current Issues in Tourism. She regularly presents her results to international conferences such as TTRA, ERNOP, American Marketing Association Congress.

Output plan including publication and dissemination activities

The following outputs are taken into consideration:

1. According to an individual research plan, the PhD student will have to elaborate three scientific reports:

   a) A literature review regarding the evolution of the concept of culture and cultural heritage in a certain field and the possibility of using Service-Dominant-Logic (SDL) and Service-Science (SS), within the general framework of the Viable-Systems -Approach (VSA) in the chosen cultural field;

   b) A qualitative research involving the management of cultural heritage based on the logic of value co-creation by actors-integrators of resources in a type of network according to the Viable-Systems-Approach (VSA) consonance model.

   c) A quantitative research at the level of multi-stakeholders regarding the assessment of their co-creative capacity to participate in the conservation, improvement and valorization of cultural heritage.

2. Publications and conferences

   a) a) At least three articles published in journals indexed in international databases and/or in WOS, individually or as first author within a research team;

b)   At least three participations with scientific communications at international conferences
In all the articles and presentations at the conferences, topics from the proposed research topic will be addressed.
3. PhD thesis.

Estimated schedule

Output	Due date
Scientific reports (SR)	
SR 1	June 2025
SR 2	December 2025
SR 3	May 2026
Articles	
Article 1	Sept.-Oct. 2025
Article 2	Mars-Avril 2026
Article 3	December 2026 - January 2027
International Conferences (IC)	
IC1	December 2025
IC2	April 2026
IC3	December 2026
PhD thessis	September 2027