

## **Creative tourism in Saint Petersburg: the state of the art**

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### **Abstract**

Tourism development in St. Petersburg, which is a major cultural centre, has improved in terms of tourist flows; both tourism demand and tourist products have become more diverse. These improvements give grounds for a fairly optimistic prognosis for the tourist industry in St. Petersburg. At the same time, there are a number of factors which may endanger sustainable development of tourism in St. Petersburg. The current situation calls for a more flexible and innovative approach to industry development. Among these factors are the pronounced seasonal character of tourism, the short-term visits of most of the tourists, and the rather conservative, academic cultural image of St. Petersburg, which compromises the city's appeal as a destination for certain tourist segments. Another critical limitation on the development of cultural tourism in general and of creative tourism in particular is the low involvement of the population in cultural and tourist events held in the city. This makes it relevant to look for new approaches for creative tourism development in St. Petersburg as an important tool for the sustainable development of the industry. This article considers the existing and potential competitive advantages of St. Petersburg as a tourist destination on the basis of creative tourism development.

**Key words:** cultural heritage, creative tourism, cultural products consumption, creative cluster

### **Introduction**

Saint Petersburg, as most cultural capitals in Europe, is a popular day trip and short break destination for both leisure and business travel. Studies of cultural and creative tourism are particularly important for Saint Petersburg as tourism is a key area where business and culture interact. The amount of research devoted to cultural tourism in Russia is still quite small (Brown et al., 2000; Gordin, 2009; Gordin and Matetskaya, 2010; Hollander, 1999). In other countries, however, there have been many publications devoted to issues of cultural tourism (McKercher, 2002; Richards, 2006; Smith and Robinson, 2006), as well as reports from different international organizations that directly or indirectly deal with cultural tourism (ICOM, 2007; OECD, 2009; UNESCO, 2006).

One of the most promising trends in these studies of tourism is the fact that the terms 'tourist' and 'tourism' are conceptualized as being closely linked to the level of satisfaction from the consumption of 'cultural heritage' and to having a new creative experience. Creative tourism involves not just being a spectator and engaging in sightseeing, but also a reflexive interaction on the part of tourists who are usually thought of as 'non-producers' in a traditional analyses (Richards and Wilson, 2007). The essence of this approach to studying tourism consists in perceiving tourists as consumers (OECD, 2009; Prentice, 2001).

In our discussion we pay special attention to creative tourism development in order to introduce a St. Petersburg perspective, and to bring into the spotlight new challenges that the city faces today. The second question is how to create effective policies that would boost the development of creative ecosystems while combining creative industries, urban planning and other types of tourism. Also we pay special attention to cultural events and agendas that could establish a real connection between cultural policy and economic development policy at the city level.

### **Cultural tourism development in St. Petersburg: problems and prospects**

The notion of creative tourism has been recently considered from different points of view (Richards and Palmer, 2010; Wurzburger et al., 2008). One of the approaches treats creative tourism as a means of acceleration of regional development. Richards and Wilson (2007) believe that creative approach has been assigned a more important role in regional development strategies due to the following factors: symbolic economy growth will put creativity into a privileged position as compared to cultural products; cities and regions tend to employ culture as a factor that increases the rate of economic growth and, hence, they should look for new cultural products in order to create competitive advantages which would make them unique in a market that is becoming more and more crowded; destinations which lack cultural monuments have to look for new methods of increasing their competitiveness as compared to those destinations which can boast a number of cultural monuments.

In the case of St. Petersburg, the search for competitive advantages on the basis of employing rich and versatile cultural heritage of the city plays the decisive role. St. Petersburg nowadays is a major cultural centre which can boast more than 150 museums, about 50 theatres, 5 open-air museums, 12 higher educational establishments specializing in humanities, and more than 250 annual cultural festivals. Other important factors worth mentioning are the well-known city brand, the accessibility of the city and cruise tourism involvement. Traditionally, cruise tourism has always aimed to acquaint tourists with cultural sightseeing attractions in ports of call.

However, the promising tourist potential of the city makes the heads of the major cultural institutions and some tourist companies take things for granted to a certain extent. The research carried out by Gordin in 2009 with 29 top managers and directors in the museum and tourism sectors showed that it would not take long before the city begins to face significant problems in developing cultural tourism. The major problems were identified as first, the limited capacity of the most attractive cultural objects, which makes the most popular city attractions inaccessible to many tourists and city-dwellers in high season;

second, most cultural products and channels of consumption are traditional or even conservative and this factor, experts argue, limits the attractiveness of St. Petersburg, especially for tourists of the older generation, who are very sensitive to the inflationary pricing of St. Petersburg hotels, restaurants and cultural institutions. Third, interactive cultural tourism products are underrepresented in the city; fourth, the dominant forms of cultural product consumption are passive; fifth, entertaining formats of introducing items of cultural value (including those targeted at children and the teen-age audience) are limited and sixth, most visits to St. Petersburg are short-term, and tourists therefore tend to visit only the major attractions, which is particularly pronounced for cruise tourism. These trends make it relevant to study the experience in creative tourism development accumulated in St. Petersburg as well as to seek new approaches to its implementation.

### **From cultural to creative tourism: a change of focus?**

The major difference between cultural and creative tourism lies in the resource base of these types of tourism and in the tourists' motivation to participate in activities. Cultural tourism mostly focuses on exploring the cultural and historical heritage, the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the historic and biographical artifacts, descriptions, legends, as well as different art forms. However, the consumption of cultural products takes place in a passive fashion. In contrast, the main goal of creative tourism is experiencing things first-hand, living through new emotions, acquiring new knowledge and skills through engaging in creative activity shared with fellow tourists, and through interactions with the locals. (Hospers and van Dalm, 2005; Pine and Gilmore, 1995; Richards and Wilson, 2006). In this sense, the notion of creativity refers to the fact that tourists acquaint themselves with the tourist destination not only by being physically present but by being exposed to the cultural heritage that makes the city remarkable, and by means of consuming the local cultural products and events. The look of the city, the services offered, the engineering communications, the education system and the transportation system could all be perceived as a source of inspiration if tourists are moved by what they see.

The most evident means of ensuring a creative tourist experience is improving the look of the public venues, since, in this instance, the language barrier does not interfere with product consumption. However, creativity can be relevant to any sphere of the city life, including socializing, shopping, services, telecommunications, etc. A broader understanding of creativity is supported by many researchers who view creative technologies and creativity as a resource in all spheres (cf. creative economy (Howkins, 2001); creative city (Landry, 2000)); creative jobs and creative class (Florida, 2002); creative industries (Pratt, 2009).

Thus, the notion of creative tourism expands beyond the cultural sphere and cultural industries.

Nevertheless, generally recognized definitions of creative tourism link it to cultural tourism, 'Creative tourism is a form of cultural tourism' (Ohridska-Olson, 2010; Richards, 2006). More specifically, creative tourism is, 'travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture' (UNESCO, 2006, p.3).

Thus the existence of cultural tourism supports the development of creative tourism, and many cities boast an effective combination of these kinds of tourism (e.g., Barcelona, Berlin, Antwerp, Rome, and London). At the same time, the existing tangible cultural heritage should not be recognized as the only source of creative tourism development, as traditions and the intangible cultural capital of a tourist destination appear to be more valuable in the case at hand.

St. Petersburg has always been a city where ideas originated and were disseminated, as well as a major venue for the exchange of experience and ideas in the spheres of technology, science, education, culture and the arts. In this sense, the city has always been the centre of creative tourism as it has assisted practitioners in different spheres in enriching their knowledge base and in mastering professional skills. St. Petersburg has developed a rich R&D sector, including a number of educational and research centres, career development centres, centres for practical professional advancement in the humanities, medicine, economics, management, technology and innovation, etc.). This is why the creative potential of St. Petersburg has always been in demand and has always been fruitfully utilized.

Our focus is on using the creative potential in the sphere of the arts and culture as a basis for cultural heritage development. We believe that technologies, traditions and knowledge, which are reflected in the sphere of traditional culture and in the city's cultural heritage, can be employed as a promising basis for cultural heritage development. Specifically, in the sphere of social technologies, coexistence of multiple religions (confessions) and tolerance can serve as a basis for cultural heritage development. In the sphere of crafts, modern creative industries that are developing on the basis of combining folk arts and crafts and modern design techniques can serve as a basis for cultural heritage development. Finally, the sphere of the performing arts, including modern and classical dance, and a wide range of

music – from classical and ancient music to rock, pop and ethno-music, etc. – can serve as a basis for cultural heritage development.

Our research considers creative tourism creation and its study from two points of view, first, we consider the consumer demand for creative tourism, and, in particular, the roles of consumer creativity and of models of their behavior and second, from the supply standpoint, we focus on producers of innovative cultural goods and services.

### **Creative tourism demand**

Consumer behaviour determines creative tourism demand. Specifically, the following factors are important in this market: the degree and nature of consumer participation in cultural and creative practices; cultural heritage preservation; broadening channels and formats of human interaction in society and the growth rates of cultural tourism and other forms of tourism. In this section we will consider these factors in more detail.

### **Active participation in cultural practices and consumer creativity.**

Creativity as an epiphenomenon reflects current social and economic tendencies (Salman, 2010), which results in the rise of knowledge-driven industries relying on creative and cultural activities. Human creativity has the potential to generate income, jobs and export earnings in advanced economies of the world (*The Creative Economy Report, 2008, 2010*). Moreover, this scenario is also a feasible option for developing countries. For many Russian cities, including St. Petersburg, the development of creative industries has become a necessity, in other words, an issue of survival. This is why creative industries development could be considered as a means of social innovation as well (Ruutu et al., 2009). Current discussions are devoted to the topic of whether or not human capital and creativity are sources of local development in cities, and how they influence territorial, economic and social processes in urban space (Comunian et al., 2010; Clark et al., 2002; Florida, 2002, 2005; Storper and Scott, 2009).

We can identify two approaches to the concept of creative industries: creativity as potential and creativity as a human resource. Everyone ought to be creative – that is, both the producer and the consumer. For instance, one of classifications representing creative industries' models (Hartley, 2005) singles out this model as 'creative citizens (culture),' which refers to an open innovation network. The model is characterized by the following parameters: the model involves 'creative citizens' – the general population, the workforce, consumers, users, entrepreneurs and artists; the energies of everyone in the system can be harnessed, thus contributing the value of entire social networks and that of the individual

agency of whole populations to the *growth of knowledge*; there must be a domain of experimentation and adaptation, where individual agency may have network effects.

This is why the creative culture itself should be the source of ideas and innovations, and should contribute to overall progress. In many cities that are viewed as 'creative', there are strong connections between traditions, the arts, and the unique atmosphere and authentic character of the venue (Hall, 2000; Richards, 2006). Cities become venues for implementing active creative projects and processes.

On the one hand, St. Petersburg can boast all of the advantages of a creative venue – the very architecture of the city is a magnificent backdrop for various events and a source of inspiration, and numerous art festivals are held every year in St. Petersburg. On the other hand, the creative atmosphere leaves much to be desired; unique creative initiatives that do not come from cultural organizations but rather from creative communities or individuals are few and far between. There are no street fairs or flea markets, and no outlets offering local clothes, food or souvenirs. For instance, it is symptomatic that a first festival of young designers' hand-made items *DeLa'Ruk* (= 'made by the hands') was held only in August 2008 in the yard of Saint Catherine Catholic Church on Nevskiy prospect, which is one of the best areas in the city (DeLaRuk, 2012).

**Figure 1.** DeLa'Ruk Handmade Festival



Picture courtesy of 'DeLa'Ruk' <http://www.delaruk.com/>

The festival was held again in December of the same year at the Mega shopping mall in one of the suburban residential neighborhoods of the city. Despite the fact that the festival was of great interest to the design community, as well as to the locals and to tourists, it received no

support from the city authorities or businesses. While the festival has returned to its original 'historic' venue in 2010, the organizers are currently unsure of its prospects. Marketplaces that offer folk craft products could be seen as the most significant tourist attractions, and the St. Petersburg market of hand-made products is currently experiencing significant growth. However, this marketplace is mostly web-based, and can be characterized as e-commerce; hence it lacks actual agents who would operate on the city streets and is not targeted toward tourists. While there are numerous new spacious shopping centers, especially in the suburbs, these are not venues for creative recreational activities, communication or generating creative ideas.

### **Cultural heritage preservation.**

The demand for authenticity in relation to cultural tourism has changed approaches to preserving cultural heritage and has changed the ways in which cultural tourism is employed as a basis for developing creative tourism. Ohridska-Olson and Ivanov (2010) argue that, 'The trend shifted in the last 10 years towards authentic recreation of technologies and skills in arts and crafts production versus artificial representation of cultural heritage. This represents a major demand factor for creative tourism and an instrument to preserve cultural heritage in its most authentic forms' (Ohridska-Olson and Ivanov, 2010, p. 6).

Tourists strive to be discoverers or pioneers in the sphere of the arts, they are eager to learn original techniques used in creating cultural and art products. For example, tourists are interested in being introduced to authentic technologies used in building houses. Another important aspect of cultural heritage preservation is 'heritage mining' through which cities attempt 'to re-develop themselves through the revalorisation of cultural heritage, usually with an emphasis on the built heritage' (Richards and Wilson, 2006).

### **Broadening interaction channels and formats in society.**

The existence of new forms of interaction and of new opportunities for intercultural communication while traveling have enhanced the development of creative tourism in the past twenty years. Due to the development of social networks on the Internet and the availability of gadgets such as translators, navigators and local SIM-cards, new communication formats between tourists and the locals have emerged. Youth tourism organizations are highly active in this field, as evidenced by the existence of educational programmes, language learning programmes, and work and travel programmes. It should be noted that nowadays in St. Petersburg there is a great deal of growth in all of these areas of social communication between local residents and tourists.

One of the trends is creating venues for creative communication, such as lofts, clubs, literary cafés, book-selling cafés and bookstores. This kind of social interaction is typical of Moscow and St. Petersburg but not of the provinces, hence the increasing popularity of this kind of communication among tourists visiting Russia. Moreover, foreign tourists with a creative background show a great deal of interest in these types of interactions with their Russian colleagues, friends and peers. It is worth noting that the process of creating an infrastructure of intellectual communication is well under way in St. Petersburg. One of the key players on the intellectual communications market is a major bookselling network – *Bukvoyed*, which literally means ‘a letter-eater’, in other words, a bookworm.

In principle, St. Petersburg could be a candidate for being a UNESCO City of Literature (UNESCO, 2012). The criteria for achieving City of Literature status are: Quality, quantity and diversity of publishing and editorial initiatives; Quality and quantity of educational programmes; and urban environment in which literature plays an integral part; experience in hosting literary events and festivals, promoting foreign and domestic texts; the existence of libraries, bookstores and cultural centres; active efforts to translate literary works from diverse languages and the use of new media to promote and strengthen the literary market.

**Figure 2.** Museum Quarter Excursion with the Postman Guide



Picture courtesy of Museum Quarter: <http://www.museum-city.ru/?p=229>

One can find diverse literary activities in St. Petersburg, which manifest themselves in a variety of book stores, clubs, universities, libraries, archives, scholarly centers, and publishing houses. Nowadays, tourists can familiarize themselves with the distinguished cultural and literary history of the city through specialized literacy tourists' programmes. 15 literacy museums devoted to the life and work of famous Russian writers and poets are included in special tourist routes. Among them are the [Anna Akhmatova museum at the](#)



[Fountain House](#), [The St. Petersburg Nabokov museum](#), the Dostoevsky Museum, the Institute of Russian Literature (the Pushkin House), and some others. One of the new options available to tourists are city tours conducted by a famous literary character, such as a postman (someone as a guide impersonating a postman), for example (Museum Quarter in St. Petersburg, <http://www.museum-city.ru/>).

Venues such as St. Petersburg's Literary Café and Dom Knigi, which can be translated as The Book House, have an almost religious significance to some because they represent St. Petersburg's literary tradition. These venues are situated in the center of the city, and continue to support the image of the city as the heart of the Russian literature. In addition, a number of new bookstores and cafes have opened recently and have become very famous among the locals and tourists alike.

More than 1000 publishing houses are located in St. Petersburg. Academic books, art literature and children's books are very popular. As of 2007, the Russian Book Fair has been organized annually in St. Petersburg. The Book Fair has enjoyed the status of an international event, with 278 participants from 10 countries, and with about 60,000 visitors (<http://peterburg2.ru/events/51379.html>).

The organizers' goal is for the Book Fair to become the largest exhibition in terms of attendance in St. Petersburg, and to be the most exciting annual book-related event for the locals. The Book Fair affords opportunities for cooperation between authors, publishers, distributors and readers.

In order to solidify the status of St. Petersburg as a literary city, the following issues need to be resolved: insufficient focus on the English language in the following areas: the publishing business, literary events and even city tours, a lack of consolidation of the key stakeholders in the development and promotion of products in the tourism market and in the entertainment industry in St. Petersburg, museums, cafés, and book trade being examples of the products in question; insufficient integration of the city itself and of tour operators into international organizations that support the development of literary tourism and people's interest in literature in general.

These issues of tourism organization in St. Petersburg are symptoms of the more general problem of weak connections between touristic attractions and tour operators. Interestingly, one of the first 'unofficial' tourist routes around St. Petersburg was developed and introduced not by professional tour operators but by students of linguistics who wanted to make city

tours with their foreign guests more entertaining. Unfortunately, St. Petersburg tour operators have not appreciated the competitive advantage of such forms of creative tourism.

In our opinion, the rise of unofficial tours in St. Petersburg reflects the large number of creative educational establishments in the city. All over the world, institutions of higher learning have proven to be idea incubators and, as such, are highly regarded by tourists. Given that nowadays graduates of these institutions in Russia face difficulties with finding employment, creating opportunities for involving young, creative college graduates in working for the tourist industry and in socializing with tourists is a promising avenue both for the tourist industry and the college graduates. The projects that new college graduates become involved in may include the development of creative tourism.

### **Creative tourism and other kinds of tourism.**

Another phenomenon that motivates the development of creative tourism on the basis of consumer demand is meeting industry or MICE industry (MICE is an acronym for the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions/Conferences and Exhibitions/Events tourism segment) (Fenich, 2005). MICE-tourism offers a wide range of training and game sessions in museums, palaces and parks. These activities, according to the organizers, promote team building, creating incentives for workers to achieve self-realization. The organizers are able to create an unusual atmosphere for business events scheduled in the programme of visits to tourist destinations. Currently, educational and training services are often provided in St. Petersburg palaces. These services are in high demand among the tourist categories that they target. What is special about St. Petersburg is that there are a great number of business trainers who not only employ the 'decorative' backdrop of historical buildings in their training sessions, but also make famous historical events and people known from the history of St. Petersburg part of the training sessions that they organize. The results of Gordin's 2009 survey mentioned earlier showed that, according to the experts, MICE-tourism is the most promising initiative in terms of combining the business, scientific and cultural potential of St. Petersburg. Experts specifically pointed out that MICE-services based on the *edutainment principle* are highly competitive. In the light of these findings, organizers of training sessions, seminars, exhibitions and tourist cultural programmes ought to overcome the problems of tourist services in St. Petersburg that we discussed earlier, namely, the lack of interactive activities that would appeal to different tourist segments.

### **Creative tourism supply**

The development of the creative tourism market is determined by the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of creative tourism development, by their cooperation and

interaction, as well as by the way in which interests are accommodated. In previous studies, certain factors which determine creative tourism supply were singled out. For example, Ohrodska-Olson and Ivanov (2010, p. 9-10) present the following model:

- local tourism infrastructure
- hospitality
- unique local arts and crafts
- unique local cultural offerings
- creative industries
- other types of tourism

We consider the following major factors that predetermine how creative tourism development takes place in St. Petersburg: first, a *prominent cultural heritage*. St. Petersburg is a world famous cultural centre, and the city's cultural heritage is included into UNESCO's list of cultural and historical values. St. Petersburg is a world famous touristic brand, and it is a city that encourages the development of creative industries. Second, *the rise of the tourism market*. Major international tour operators and key players in the hospitality business are well represented in St. Petersburg, the tourism market being complemented by the active development of minor hotels and hostels numbering over 500. Minor businesses are widely introducing various creative technologies not only in promoting their own hotels but in providing different services for their guests (Karhunen, 2008). Thirds, *an extensive transport infrastructure*. St. Petersburg has a major international airport, a high-speed railway service connecting it to major Russian cities and to Helsinki, Finland, the Sea Passenger port 'Sea Façade', and the ferry link to the Baltic states. In 2009 the port handled 426,000 incoming passengers, rising to 460,000 passengers in 2010. In 2011 380,000 cruise and 170,000 ferry passengers are expected to arrive to the city via the 'Sea Façade' port terminal. It is obvious that the development of cruise tourism demands innovative approaches to presenting the city's cultural heritage, which we will discuss below. And fourth, *local arts and crafts as tourism products*. The city is developing creative tourism products and services based on local arts and crafts. Not only is the authentic Russian national culture widely represented in St. Petersburg, but prominent examples of world culture and creative technologies are represented as well. For the most part, these creative technologies are based on cultural heritage preservation and dissemination of cultural practices and services. For example, a great deal of publicity was generated by the restoration works on Rembrandt's 'Danae' in The State Hermitage Museum. The story goes that the painting was damaged by a mentally ill person who poured sulphuric acid on it. The unique experience of restorers can be employed as a new tourist and cultural product. Today, the Hermitage is one of a handful of major museums which openly demonstrate to the public different technologies used in

preserving and restoring art objects. It should be noted that St. Petersburg cannot boast unique local crafts or cuisine. In many ways what the city has to offer can be qualified as both traditional and cosmopolitan. But even given the traditional nature of the city, something new that would appeal both to the residents and tourists can be found. We have developed a number of new creative services proposals and tourist products proposals, which are represented in Table 1.

Table 1: New creative tourist products for St. Petersburg

Creative products and events	Places/examples/factors
glassworks, colored glass production; master classes and excursions to workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• numerous glass art galleries</li> <li>• glassworks, artists' studios</li> <li>• art glass and ceramics department in St. Petersburg Academy of Industrial Arts named after Stieglitz</li> </ul>
decorative and applied arts, and jewelry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unique traditional and modern techniques, e.g. modern hot enamelling technique</li> <li>• a sample of modernizing a traditional kind of decorative-applied art</li> <li>• artists' studios and art galleries</li> </ul>
stained-glass windows production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stained-glass windows have always been an essential part of building decoration in St. Petersburg</li> <li>• various stained-glass techniques are being resurrected, and stained-glass windows are being restored</li> <li>• stained-glass works are open in St.-Isaac's Cathedral</li> </ul>
tapestry and St. Petersburg's espalier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• classical espalier technique has been in use in the city workshops from XVIII century to present day</li> <li>• numerous workshops, exhibitions</li> </ul>
ceramics and porcelain painting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory: its history and today's activity (there are plans for launching an educational project introducing master classes, and industrial art cluster)</li> <li>• porcelain and hand-painting of porcelain and ceramics are quite popular</li> </ul>
microminiatures made using different materials, such as metal, wood, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is a unique museum of microminiature in St. Petersburg</li> <li>• a creative community 'Masters' Guild' unites Russian artists specializing in miniature genre</li> </ul>
doll making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• theatre workshops, puppet theatres</li> <li>• departments of costume making, hand-made industry, children's products industry</li> </ul>

The fact that decorative and applied arts and crafts and various technologies employed in producing hand-made goods generate a lot of interest is proven by the rapid development of the arts and crafts market in St. Petersburg and in other Russian cities and towns. While there have been no significant studies devoted to the Russian hand-made goods market, experts and businesspeople are unanimous in claiming that the demand is huge and that the market is far from being saturated.

Vendors participating in the hand-made goods market have become experts in promoting their products via e-commerce: they opened specialized groups in major social networks *Odnoklassniki* (= schoolmates) and *Vkontakte* (= 'in contact'); in addition, there are blogs and online shops, etc devoted to hand-made goods. Clicking 'hand-made' in the *Vkontakte* network in St. Petersburg brought up more than 900 groups that had between 50 and 2000 members (as of 15.02.2011). According to hand-made goods vendors, up to 90% of orders come via the Internet. Russian community devoted to hand-made goods in LiveJournal has more than 48,500 posts, most of which are photos of products that are for sale (<http://www.perspektyva.org/news/last/3680.html>).

At the same time, the hand-made goods market is not focused on tourist demand. The fact remains that two thirds of souvenir and gift products in St. Petersburg are represented by Chinese copies of traditional Russian folk craft, according to Vadim Savchenko, the Chairman of the Association 'Folk art crafts and works' (<http://www.bishelp.ru/ekoot/detail.php?ID=85827>).

### **Development of the creative industries**

Effective urban development is a prerequisite for bringing out the creative aspects of a city, and the impact of urban development extends beyond creating cultural areas (thematic areas) or creative clusters. The main point is that these areas should be venues where people can interact. Interaction between individuals can be facilitated through new project development, creative incubators, through creating new shopping areas and designers' studios, etc.

While these developments are taking place, they are not targeted to the tourists per se. There is a language barrier, and many products are not ready to be launched on the tourist market. In practice, Hartley (2010) argues, a combination of all three models – creative clusters, creative services, and creative citizens – is part of the intellectual infrastructure of a creative city, bringing into one place the energies of producers and consumers, intellectual

property and intellectual capital, elaborate and emergent creativity, work and leisure, supply and demand.

### **Unique cultural offerings**

With respect to the search for new formats in creating and promoting cultural products based on creative technologies, some interesting trends have become evident in the activities of St. Petersburg cultural organizations. First of all, as we have noted above, one of the major problems of tourism development in St. Petersburg is its seasonal character – 75% of tourists visit St. Petersburg between May and September (Arkhipov, 2011). In order to attract tourists in the low season, major cultural and art organizations resort to using creative products. Using creative products to attract customers is typical of the companies whose services are in high demand in high season. Considering the fact that high season lasts for about half a year – from April to October – we can assume that only a short period of time remains for the development of activities which can be qualified as promoting creative tourism. However, this is exactly the period when the theatres' backstage and museum deposits are open to the public (e.g., excursions in Mariinsky Theatre), the general public actively interact with artists, actors, musicians, and museum keepers, and balls are held in museum palaces (e.g., Tzarskoselsky New Year Ball).

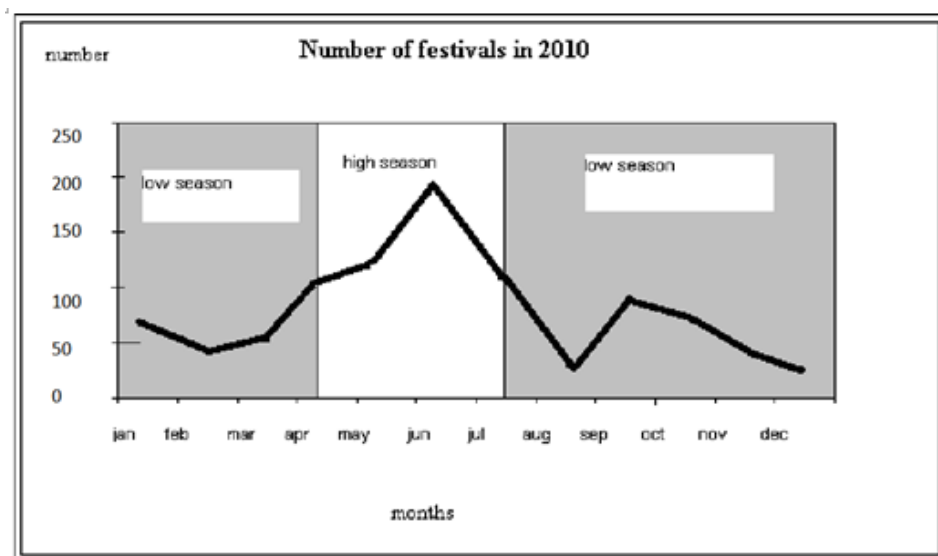
It is also during the low season that new venues are open for presenting new creative tourist products developed by many leading cultural organizations. For instance, concerts accompanied by lectures are given on the premises of the Concert Hall of Mariinsky Theatre, the Marble Palace of the State Russian Museum offers interactive performances, and the State Museum Reserve Peterhof offers the specialty of the house – theatrical shows in the parks. On the one hand, these events help to open new spaces of cultural activities, and, on the other hand, they assist in channeling the tourist flow, which is particularly important in the summer.

Yet another factor is that dozens of art organizations engaged in cultural tourism are actively operating in St. Petersburg, as has already been mentioned. However, vast numbers of tourists (both Russian and foreign) visit only the 5-7 most famous cultural institutions. In order to attract additional visitors, less well-known theatres and museums offer various interactive forms of cultural product consumption, such as interactive performances in the foyer before and after the show, opportunities for children to make something with their own hands after the museum tour, quizzes following the museum tour with prizes for the winners, and so on. It should be noted that most minor St. Petersburg museums exhibit art works that are valuable in terms of their historical, professional, local or biographical nature. In the first

years after the October revolution the Bolsheviks confiscated most art objects from private collections from remote palaces and minor museums and transferred them to central museums in order to ensure their preservation, for inventory taking, and also in order to sell some of these art works abroad at a later point. These past events brought about the current marketing strategy of the minor museums. The strategy they use aims at promoting art objects against the backdrop of their historic environment rather than at exhibiting art objects of unique value. This strategy enables minor museums to interact with museum visitors with varying interests and ages in more flexible ways, since most minor museums do not offer 'must-see' art works.

Another factor is linked to the rapid development of cruise tourism in St. Petersburg, and the problem of dealing with large groups of tourists who arrive at the same time. The tourist flow proves to be overwhelming for the limited number of highly popular cultural sightseeing attractions. A way out in this case is creating a number of events in the city, scheduling regular festivals and festivities, and encouraging participation in other types of events, which would serve as a replacement for the popular attractions. These kinds of events especially appeal to younger tourists who appreciate interactive and creative activities. Currently, the situation with event scheduling is tricky. The distribution of St. Petersburg festivals throughout the year is far from regular (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** The number of festivals in 2010 in St. Petersburg.



**Source:** The Institute for Cultural Programs (ICP), 2010

However, from the point of view of creative tourism development this irregularity in festival distribution has both beneficial and negative outcomes. For instance, the 'Development

programme of St. Petersburg as a tourist centre for 2005-2010' announced promoting festival activities in low season as a priority and as the most important synchromarketing tool in St. Petersburg. The city has initiated and organized such festivals as 'White Days', 'The Arts Square', the Christmas festival, and a new series of Shrovetide (*Maslenitsa*) festivities in downtown and in the suburbs. Some of these festivals have already become traditional. Unfortunately, their impact on the intensity of the tourist flow in low season cannot be considered to be decisive. Even the festival which, in our opinion, is the leading one among the low season festivals, the 'Maslenitsa festival', has not yet become a major world famous cultural event. In our previous studies we pointed out the need for organizing a brand name festival in St. Petersburg, like the ones that are in existence in Edinburgh, Venice and Salzburg (Gordin and Matetskaya, 2010). A festival of this kind would last a few weeks, involve several venues, and be supported by the visits of world-famous celebrities or by exhibitions featuring new art objects. This type of a festival would be capable of attracting a considerable number of tourists in the low tourist season.

At the same time, in some respects, high festival activity in the summer is advantageous. The reason for this is that the summer is exactly the time when many festivals can be more interactive (e.g., the festival contest 'The Imperial Gardens of Russia', 'The White Nights Festival', the International Festival of Argentine Tango 'The White Nights Tango', 'The Carnival in Tzarskoye Selo'). Although we cannot qualify the above-mentioned festivals as world-famous art events, still, their combined impact creates a natural atmosphere of an on-going holiday, which is essential for any major tourist centre. The participation of tourists in small-scale festivals and in interactive events in particular, can serve as an adequate replacement for a series of typically visited popular attractions. It should be emphasized that many of the 'minor' festivals mentioned above engage both professional and non-professional participants and involve city residents and tourists (including foreign ones) in the events programme.

In order to research the prospects for creative tourism development in St. Petersburg, we conducted a peer review of 334 art festivals, festivities and contests of different genres organized by a range of organisations in the city in 2010. We have put forward a hypothesis that a number of parameters play a crucial role in making a festival an interactive one. Meeting the 'interactivity requirement' can facilitate the development of creative tourism in St. Petersburg. We considered including the following festival events to be crucial in this respect: First, making interactive events part of the festival programme; second, contest events (contests for the best costume, the best drawing, the best bouquet, etc.); third, educational events (master classes, public lectures, etc.); fourth, events oriented toward promoting



professional communication (seminars, conferences, debates, etc.) and fifth, events oriented towards non-professional communication (meeting actors, visiting backstage spaces, etc).

According to these parameters most festivals were assessed as low-interaction level events. Only a quarter of all festivals held in St. Petersburg included any interactive events in their

**Figure 3:** St Petersburg Carnival



Picture courtesy of St. Petersburg Carnival

programmes. This state of affairs is in part due to the academic nature of St. Petersburg culture. In the meantime, the analysis of creative parameters of specific types of St. Petersburg festivals shows that interaction seems to be a hallmark of multigenre (mixed) festivals, which are among the most popular festivals. As a result of the analysis of the list of festivals in the St Petersburg Calendar of Events ([www.billboard.spb.ru](http://www.billboard.spb.ru)) we could identify the following events as 'creative festivals':

Festival 'Sounds and colors of the world' <http://inter-festival.ru/page17.html>

International Ballet Festival 'Dance open' <http://www.danceopen.com/>

St. Petersburg Pret-a-Porter Week 'Defile na Neve'. Fashion Show on the Neva  
<http://www.defilenaneve.ru/#/en/>

International Festival of Russian Theaters in the CIS and Baltic States 'Meeting in Russia' <http://www.teatr.gorodovoy.spb.ru/news/756544.shtml>

International Theater Festival 'Rainbow' <http://www.tyuz-sp.ru/?s=repertoire&id=66>

International Music Festival 'Stars of the White Nights' <http://www.mariinsky.ru/>

St. Petersburg Choir Festival <http://www.choirfestival.ru/>

International Music Festival 'St. Petersburg Palaces' <http://palacefest-eng.spb.ru/>

The Festival of Museums' Programme for Children 'Children's Days in St Petersburg' <http://www.museum12345.ru/cat/544/ru>

**Table 2:** Genre specificity of festivals with interactive events

The type of festival	Proportion of festivals of a specific genre among the total number of festivals (%)	Proportion of festivals of a specific genre among the festivals with interactive events (%)	Proportion of festivals with interactive events among the total number of festivals of this genre (%)
Music	35	26	20
Theatre	9	2	7
Dance	10	10	26
Cinema	13	8	16
Mixed	27	47	45

Considering the rapid development of media technologies, cinema and theatre festivals showed a surprisingly low levels of interactivity. The low level of creativity of theatre festivals is indicated by the lack of contest procedures; the proportion of theatre festivals among festivals featuring contests is only 10%. Another interesting trend was revealed in the course of the study: festivals organized by state-owned legal entities tend to include more interactive events in the festival programme than non-state organizers (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Festival ownership and interactive events

Type of organization form	The percentage of festivals held by this kind of organization out of the total percentage of festivals (%)	The percentage of festivals held by this kind of organization out of the total percentage of festivals with interactively formatted events (%)
Non-governmental organizations	27	23
State	34	43
Commercial	26	24
Mixed festivals	13	10

The differences between state and non-state organizations are probably related to the fact that state cultural organizations have more experience in conducting festival activities, and

they have more secure financial and social standing. Festivals that originated within the past three years also tend to be twice as interactive as those with a longer history.

Another factor worth mentioning is that festivals with interaction-oriented events account for 41% of the overall number of festivals organized with creative educational institutions as partners. However, the total number of festivals in which creative educational institutions participate as organizers is rather low – there are only thirty seven of these. Nineteen more festivals are organized with the participation of other kinds of educational institutions. It is evident that there is a great deal of potential for further development in the area of festival creativity.

### **Cultural cluster formation in St. Petersburg**

Gordin and Matetskaya's (2010) study of the distribution of art organizations and creative industries in St. Petersburg and its suburbs uncovered the following existing and potential cultural clusters: culture heritage clusters; creative clusters; ethnocultural clusters; mass-cultural clusters and art incubators. We would like to further consider the role played by certain cultural clusters in forming creative tourist products. *Cultural heritage clusters*, which are mostly represented by architectural monuments, museums, and historic sights, do not seem to be promising in terms of contributing to the creation of creative tourist products. Nevertheless, historic areas like these have a certain cultural aura which arouses tourist interest. Even minor social interactions can have this effect. Thus this effect can come about as a result of brief communication exchanges with the locals who may be either people who happen to be interested in sightseeing or specially trained people, or volunteers, who may share with the tourists their fragmentary reminiscences relevant to the object of sightseeing. It is important to note that despite the fact that other clusters offer more interactive forms of communication with tourists, the impressions produced upon tourists within cultural heritage clusters are the strongest.

*Creative clusters* include various cultural institutions and represent the performing arts, creative workshops and laboratories, design and fashion studios, and other forms of creative self-expression which may be weakly institutionalized. It goes without saying that this type of cluster provides the strongest potential support for creative tourist products. Many cultural organizations that comprise creative clusters focus not only on meeting tourist demands but tend to provide full-scale entertainment. For instance, a customer may be offered the opportunity to make his or her own version of a souvenir using a ready-made model or to paint a souvenir, or to affix his or her own photo to a picture of a St. Petersburg place of interest. Unfortunately, most souvenirs are very generic and lack personality, and truly

creative products are rare. However, if a tourist is lucky enough to come across a creative product, they become a participant in a truly creative process.

*Ethnocultural clusters* have not yet been significantly developed in St. Petersburg. Despite the rapid growth of ethnic migrant population, it is unlikely that a Russian version of a Chinatown will appear in the centre of St. Petersburg. However, given that St. Petersburg is a multicultural and a multi-religious city, certain historical residential areas of different nationalities have been preserved in the city. For instance, there are residential quarters where Germans, Swedes and Finns lived for several centuries. Nowadays confessional buildings, authentic restaurants, shops and drugstores in these quarters are being restored; previously, these buildings were either ruined or changed in order to be used for other purposes. Historical venues not only enjoy popularity among certain groups of tourists, but also create an environment that provides opportunities for make-believe ethnohistoric experiences for tourists.

*Mass culture clusters* target general audiences, including both tourists and residents. This kind of cluster is characteristic mostly of residential areas, although some of these are created in recreational areas visited by tourists as well. From the point of view of creative tourism, these clusters offer favourable conditions for communication between tourists and residents in informal environments, such as night clubs, discos, internet-cafés and other places frequented by young people.

*Art incubators* are institutions organized by higher educational establishments to assist their graduates in their professional adaptation. Our prediction is that art incubators will become the driving force behind launching creative tourism projects in which rich cultural heritage and advanced IT technologies would be combined.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we analyzed the current state of creative tourism in St. Petersburg. We would like to emphasize that creative tourism serves as a basis for the development of cultural tourism in St. Petersburg. We identified the major factors that interfere with tourism development in St. Petersburg. Our analysis of the interactions between creative tourism and other forms of tourism enabled us to draw conclusions concerning the prospects of creation of integrated tourism products. For example, these products can be created through MICE-tourism, and through event based and cruise tourism as well. We have also proposed some new options for offering creative services and tourist products. We also provided an analysis of creative approaches to organizing festivals, which are numerous in St.

Petersburg. As a basis for this analysis, we have developed new criteria for festival creativity. The authors also explored the territorial aspects of creative tourism development potential through classifying cultural clusters that are currently emerging in St. Petersburg, and through describing their role in creative tourism development in the city.

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