



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement Nº 700893.

Partner organisations



# The innovation journey of tourism entrepreneurs: evidence from Spain and the UK and policy implications

## INNOVATE

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## Dates

Start date: 1 June 2016

End date: 31 May 2018

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## Summary

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The main aim of the project is to deepen understanding of the different stages of the **innovation journey** followed by **entrepreneurs in tourism**. It will examine not only the classic startup process, involving opportunity recognition, development and early implementation of innovation in the market, but also the subsequent stages of business performance (discontinuance, growth, further innovation, etc.). This understanding will contribute to the design of more **effective innovation policies**.

## Objectives and methodological approach

- 1 Understand** the innovation journey initiated by entrepreneurs in tourism, analysing the process and how this differ in the contrasting economic, tourism and institutional environments of Spain and the UK.

This involves mainly a qualitative approach and the narratives of innovative entrepreneurs will be gathered through in-depth semi-structure interviews. Secondary data analysis and a first period of secondments with policy partners (**SEGITTUR**) dealing with tourism and innovation will contribute to set the specific contexts influencing the innovation process in each country.
- 2 Analyse** the development and performance patterns of a sample of young innovative entrepreneurs in tourism through a **longitudinal study** in Spain.

Building on an initial previous contact, this will be accomplished through **follow up interviews** that will explore the determinants of **innovation success or failure**, the firm development and gaps between performance and expectations.
- 3 Inform** policy guidelines and business practices through co-production of applied knowledge with entrepreneurs and policy partner organizations in the UK and Spain.

Key policy aspects identified during the previous stage will be transformed in collaboration with policy partner organisations (**SEGITTUR** in Spain and the **Institute of Hospitality** and the **World Travel and Tourism Council** in the UK) in an online survey targeting entrepreneurs to create validated policy guidelines. This contribution aims to bring more coherence and effectiveness to tourism innovation policy-practice.

## Originality and innovative aspects

- 1 This project represents the first attempt to provide a systematic, and theoretically informed analysis of the stages of the innovation process in tourism. Such studies are still relatively scarce in most economic sectors, but are virtually non-existent in tourism.

Two other original dimensions are: **a)** a comparative analysis of the innovation process in different national economic and institutional environments; and **b)** a focus on the multiple stages of the innovation journey of startups, and the challenges of subsequent innovation and growth. In short, this research incorporates both the temporal and the spatial or contextual dimension. In contrast, most existing research focuses on only part of the innovation journey.
- 2 This is one of the first attempts to study the links between innovation and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, rather than researching these concepts as separate entities.

This is particularly important because innovation is central to the challenge of becoming a (successful) entrepreneur, while entrepreneurship is the essential vehicle between ideas and innovation.
- 3 This is the first attempt to use a mixed method research design, in tourism innovation policy studies, involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Particularly original are: **a)** the longitudinal study of the innovation process through follow-up interviews with entrepreneurs; and **b)** a quantitative survey to validate the policy recommendations.

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# Policy and practice partner organisations

Sociedad Estatal para la Gestión de la Innovación y las Tecnologías Turísticas (SEGITTUR)



Institute of Hospitality (IOH)



World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)



## Investigators

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