Chapter 1
Introduction: Towards a Circular Economy Strategy in the Valencian Region's Tourism Industry

Marival Segarra-Oña and Virginia Santamarina-Campos

Although the tourism industry is a cornerstone of the Valencian Region's economy, it generates a variety of environmental impacts that require robust management and the implementation of measures to mitigate them. To address this issue, an innovative project entitled "Creation of an Innovation Platform for the Promotion and Implementation of a Circular Economy Strategy in the Valencian Region's Tourism Industry" has been devised.

This ambitious project, called InnoEcoTur, has received funding from the Valencian Innovation Agency and is being rolled out under the expert coordination of the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV). The project has also benefitted from significant contributions made by members of the University of Alicante (UA), the Universitat Jaume I (UJI) and the Universitat de València (UV).

The main objective of InnoEcoTur is the creation of an Innovation Platform for the circular economy in the Valencian Region to promote circular economy models in the tourism industry. To achieve this objective, the project seeks to involve different stakeholders and focus on the development of sectoral indicators, methodologies and tools that enable companies to comprehensively assess the impact of their activities from an environmental footprint perspective.

In addition, InnoEcoTur aims to create jobs in the circular economy and provide support and training to specialists to develop new environmental consultancy services. These efforts culminate in the fundamental objective of the project: to promote the circular economy in the tourism industry through the transfer of results and the implementation of eco-innovations and circular economy initiatives across the

M. Segarra-Oña
Department of Business Organisation, Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, Spain
e-mail: maseo@omp.upv.es

V. Santamarina-Campos (✉)
Department of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Assets, Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, Spain
e-mail: virsanca@upv.es

board, ranging from production and processes to business models and organizational practices.

InnoEcoTur is working closely with key stakeholders in the Valencian Region's tourism industry. This project has several specific objectives, including the creation of a dynamic map of the circular economy in the tourism sector, drawing up a catalogue of good practices with eco-innovative technologies and results, and the creation of a collaborative platform to encourage cooperation between the various stakeholders in the Valencian Region.

Two main strategies are being pursued to facilitate the implementation of these goals. Firstly, an audit of the industry's needs is being carried out to identify potential areas for improvement in terms of sustainability, involving various stakeholders in the process. Secondly, research results are being analysed to develop and implement eco-innovative technologies and methodologies in these areas of improvement, establishing a strong link between tourism and research, development and innovation (R&D and Innovation).

One of the crucial goals of this project is to promote the dissemination of the proposed eco-innovations, thus facilitating their deployment in the region's tourism industry. The ultimate goal is to formulate an effective strategy for the implementation of the circular economy.

With this objective in mind, a book has been compiled to address the various perspectives of the circular economy in the tourism industry. The publication consists of three main sections: 'Challenges and Opportunities', 'Good Practices', and 'Research, Innovation, Competitiveness and Production'. It explores the many aspects of the circular economy in tourism, showcases examples of good practice and discusses the implications of adopting the circular economy in terms of innovation, competitiveness and production.

The central purpose of this work is to create an effective link between theory and practice, making it easier for tourism businesses and stakeholders to effectively incorporate circular economy principles. It aims to provide a clear path towards a more sustainable, profitable and responsible future for tourism in the Valencian Region through practical recommendations, evidence-based research and real-life examples.

Despite the significant contributions made by tourism to economic development and job creation, it is often overshadowed by unsustainable practices. This book aims to address these concerns by proposing a transition from traditional linear production and consumption patterns to the circular economy. The focus is not only on reducing waste and optimizing resource use, but also on cultivating an organizational culture that promotes sustainable practices.

The first segment of the book, entitled 'Challenges and Opportunities', explores the journey of several tourism businesses in the Valencian Region towards the circular economy. It explores the five steps required to achieve circularity, from awareness to action, reflecting on how this can mitigate environmental and social impacts. It examines the relevance of an 'impact culture' and the role it plays in the transition to a circular economy, providing strategic recommendations for its implementation in the Valencian tourism industry.

The second section, 'Best Practices', delivers practical examples of the implementation of circular practices in various sub-sections of the tourism industry, including hotels and restaurants, as well as niche markets such as wine and beer tourism. Our researchers offer insights into the various ways in which companies can build circularity into their operating models, and we present case studies highlighting successful practices.

The third and final part, 'Research, Innovation, Competitiveness and Production', explores the potential benefits of adopting a circular economy model on a larger scale. This section explores the relationship between green innovation and corporate performance in the hospitality industry and suggests how a supportive organizational culture can drive the success of these innovations. We then discuss the application of circularity best practices in Spain, with an emphasis on the role of the hotel industry in promoting sustainable tourism. The section showcases strategies for balancing economic development with environmental conservation, while maintaining the quality of the tourism experience.

Throughout this book, our primary objective is to draw a connection between conceptual principles and their actual application, enabling businesses and stakeholders in the industry to effectively incorporate the principles of the circular economy. Through practical recommendations, evidence-based research and real-world examples, we hope to provide a roadmap to a more sustainable, profitable and responsible future in tourism.