

Understanding Creative Tourism as a Potential Catalyst for Regional Economic Development in Ultra-Peripheral Territories: Highlighting Pilot-Projects in the Azores Islands

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Abstract:- The thematic literature demonstrates that some tourism typologies, such as, rural or creative tourism, have a more prevailing function in obtaining regional development. Thus, this article examines creative tourism as a potential catalyst for regional economic development in ultra-peripheral territories by analyzing pilot-projects of creative tourism in the Autonomous Portuguese Region of the Azores. Through the study, it was possible to verify, once more, an empirical nexus between creative tourism projects and regional economic development.

Key-Words:- Creative tourism; remote territories; regional studies; territorial strategies; Tourism management.

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1 Introduction

Tourism is considered strongly connected with business models cooperating to ensure tourist interest in a particular area or destination [1–9].

In this regard, tourism expansion suggests promoting equipment, structures, and actions to get the interest of tourists. Similarly, such actions are designed to follow tourists, society groups,

and the touristic destination and territory in line with today's sustainable techniques and goals, [10-13].

In the thematic literature, it is feasible to comprehend that many authors have demonstrated that some tourism types, as is the case of slow tourism, rural tourism, or even creative tourism, gain a predominant role in achieving regional and territorial sustainability, [14-20].

If we look at Williams', [21], studies, we confirm that "(...) *employment in tourism contributes to national and regional economies*". Also, empirical proof indicates that tourist purchasing creates more sectorial employment and generates opportunities than any other market sector of the economy, [22-24].

Besides, regarding the literature review conducted by Pimenta *et al.*, [25], it is possible to evidence a strong connection between creative tourism and territorial development. The previously mentioned research points us that creative tourism works "(...) through some type of reality transformation process and demonstrates direct correlations with cultural, material and immaterial factors, by committing and involving local development agents – public and private – in the elaboration and implementation of cultural policies that attract creative tourists."

Thus, the research team designed the following empirical question: "*The creative tourism pilot-projects in the Azores Autonomous Region contribute to the regional growth?*"

This article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the thematic literature; Section 3 describes the used methodology; Section 4 reports the results; Section 5 discusses and give us some conclusions about the study result; and, finally, section 6 shows the study limitations and prospective research lines.

2 Empirical Literature

Focusing on the peripheral and ultra-peripheral regions (remote and isolated regions), the known literature reveals to us that financial-economic maturation describes a catalyst for sustainable development, [26-30]. Thus, the possibility of producing various typologies of tourism - i.e., rural tourism, religious tourism, or creative tourism - is deeply connected with entrepreneurship, new business standards and models, and the so-called Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, [30-35].

Meller and Marfán, [31], state that "(...) *the*

industrial sector is not the most appropriate approach to activate sustainable development processes in all contexts of remote territories".

Contextually, several other researchers as King, [32], confirm that statement "(...) *employment created are transient as their continuity relies on the regular flow of emigrants and tourists returning to the places of origin*". Likewise, through the eighties, the promotion of jobs in peripheral regions was primarily due to an increase in the services sector, [36-38].

In this regard, numerous regional investigations conducted in such particular regions proved that tourist spending develops more jobs and income than any other sector of the economy, [38-45].

Regarding creative tourism, the literature tell us that it encourages regional growth and development by adding value to endogenous assets, fostering a creative green economy, and not decreasing the socio-cultural sphere to the activity consumption, [46]. Thereby, it opens space for liberation, sovereignty, new adventures, and solidarity, connecting with traditions and effecting revenue through different tourist routes. However, let's look once more at Pimenta *et al.*, [25], research it is possible to realize that: "(...) *one could be left to wonder about the kind of development concept addressed in the reviewed literature and its correlation with creative tourism*".

In fact, if we analyze the reflections of Corrêa, Silveira, and Kist, [47], it is possible to deduce that there is a need to operate on growth approaches, ideas, and structures that contain regional financial, social, and ecological topics – the main spheres of the so-desired sustainable development. Nevertheless, other methods are likely for creative tourism, as is the case of Richards, [48], which assume the present position of creative tourism and the various underlying backgrounds globally.

So, we identify the nexus among creative tourism and various growth processes and strategies could guide us to mixed results relying on the region's socio-cultural characteristics and cultural and ecological values, [49-58] - i.e., the CREATOUR AZORES Project.

3 Methodology

The present research is formed by 5 pilot projects of creative tourism working in the Portuguese Archipelago of the Azores (Figure 1). Thereby,

the following pilot projects under analysis were: (a) CDIJA; (b) Refunction Project – GOODBYAZORES; (c) Art in Nature (Arte na Natureza); (d) Discover the Azores through Photography (Descubra os Açores através da fotografia); and (e) Mahilawake. Regarding the Azores Islands location, the 5 pilot projects could be found in four of the 9 Azorean islands. 2 in São Miguel Island (CDIJA and Art in Nature projects); 1 on the Terceira Island (Refunction Project – GOODBYAZORES); and 1 on Faial Island (Mahilawake).

Contextually, testing tools were used. So, the surveys and interviews were split into three specific but complementary blocs: i) a Brief Description of the Project and Planned Activities; ii) Business Model; and iii) Culture, Creativity and Community Impact. Moreover, the 12 primary interview inquiries were, divided among all the interviews, with queries sub-divided and developed. As an outcome, the whole interview was formed by 15 questions. Within the interview inquiries, it was possible to encounter open-ended questions, option selection, and agreement-level promises (using a Likert Scale).

Furthermore, bearing in mind the aim of the research and the data gathering methods, the investigation authors selected a method of data treatment based on descriptive statistics and likened the obtained outcomes with the current specialized bibliography to scrutinize for a possible connection among the pilot projects of creative tourism and the Azores territorial governance and development.

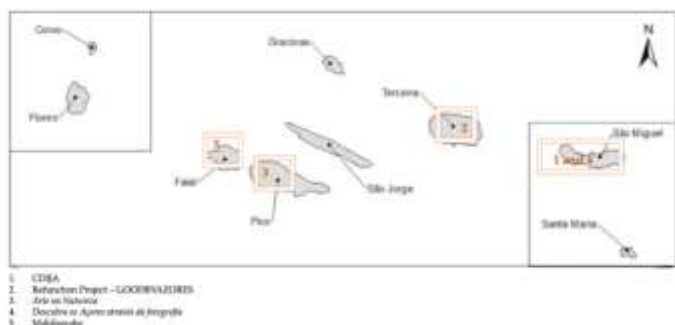


Fig. 1: Geographic location of the projects in the Azores territory.

4 Main Results

Table 1. Item-selection and Likert scale question – summarized (Appendix A).

	CDIJA	Refunction Project – GOODBYAZORES	Art in Nature	Discover the Azores through photography	Mahilawake
(1) Are most of your customers local, from Mainland Portugal or foreign?	Foreigners	Foreigners	Foreigners before the pandemic; Portuguese in the pandemic period	All	Portuguese
(2) Do you know who your potential customers are?	Mostly USA citizens	Yes	People interested in artistic culture	People interested in photography	Middle/upper class women
(3) Assess the degree of demand for your creative tourism offer between January and April 2022.	3	2	5	3	3
(4) Do you have partnerships with tourism companies?	Azorean Travel Agency DMCC and Cresceq	Ongoing	Yes	Hotels	Yes
(5) Do you have partnerships with City Councils or Parish Councils?	Not yet	Yes	Yes	No	No
(6) Do you have partnerships with national and international magazines to publicize and promote your project?	IBCCES; Blog: TravelingDifferent.com; Australian magazine called "Travel Without Limits".	No	No	No	No
(7) Do you have partnerships with raw material suppliers?	No	No	Yes	No	No
(8) Have the investments in the project to date been low, moderate, high?	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	Low
(9) Are the main costs of your project fixed (they maintain the same value throughout the year, variable or hybrid)?	Variable	Variable	Differs according to activities	No answer	Variable
(10) For the success of your project, is there a need and possibility to invest more?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No answer	Yes
(11) What are the elements of your project that have the greatest cost burden? Human resources? The physical resources?	Physical resources	Human resources	Promotion	No answer	Physical resources
(12) Is your project making a profit?	Not at this stage	No	No	Yes	Yes
(13) Are most of your customers local, from Mainland Portugal or foreign?	Foreigners	Foreigners	Foreigners before the pandemic; Portuguese in the pandemic period	All	Portuguese
(14) Do you know who your potential customers are?	Mostly USA citizens	Yes	People interested in artistic culture	People interested in photography	Middle/upper class women
(15) Assess the degree of demand for your creative tourism offer between January and April 2022.	3	2	5	3	3

Considering the business models and focus on the CDIJA project's clients, it is possible to verify that most are foreigners. In fact, the major part are clients from the USA. About the audience, their bid plans to protect homes and relatives with minors with Autism. Thus, through the training mechanisms for this specific audience, they will be capable of strengthening the answer to a wide target in the region of family tourism, inclusive tourism, and healthiness tourism. Moreover, the project's main actors consider that it is vital for the costumers experience their activities, identifying the "ready for autism" stamp as a qualified, distinguished, and liable answer to the difficulties

of these homes and families with children with Autism. The project has eventually included any customers or anticipations for the next summer season. By now, those actors are exploring the profile and encouragement of the clients through the IBCCES (International Certification as a Tourism Agent for Autism); numerous web discussions with International Autism Associations. Focusing on the Likert scale, they believe that the demand capacity for their creative tourism project bid among the Winter and Spring months of 2022 is mainly on level 3. So, this specific project has collaborations with tourism enterprises, as is the case of the Azorean Travel Agency DMC or the Cresaçor, and the articulation with national and international journals to advertise and boost the project branding - i.e., IBCCES; Blog: TravelingDifferent.com and Travel Without Limits (a thematic international magazine). Also, no synergies were related with City Councils or Parish Councils yet, nor with basic material suppliers. The Human Resources in this project are Travel Agents and Therapists specializing in Autism; the physical resources are the CDIJA - Children and Youth Development Center of the Azores; the funding resources are based on the fund PO2020; the technical resources lays on the Partnership with a task force of Azores University (UAc) academicians and professors financed by this initiative. In this sense, they believe the incomes from the creative offer are adequate to sustain the costs at different issues; the financial bet in the project to the current day have been moderate; the high costs of the projects are variables (based to the activities and the seasonality); for the success of the project, there is an essential and prospect to invest more. The components of the project that include the most significant expense commitment are the physical resources. In fact, by now, in this project, there is no profit yet.

Most Refunction Project – GOODBYAZORES customers are from outside the Azores Region. The GOODBYAZORES project aims to reach diverse consumer segments/numerous audiences. Considering the client experiences, the motivations for consumer participation in this project ambition depend on connection with new creative realities. Currently, this project does not have any paid

clients yet. The project actions were integrated into other major Cultural initiatives. According to the project's main actors' statement, nine customers were confirmed in the summer months.

Nevertheless, one goal is to reach a hundred clients by the end of the high season. They analyze the profile and incentives of their clients via exchange and by following the path of other identical promoters. Based on the Likert scale, they believe the market for their creative tourism offer between the Winter and Spring months of 2022 is mostly on level 2. This project has not yet partnered with tourism enterprises, national and international magazines to publicize and promote the project, and primary material suppliers. Nonetheless, the project collaborated with City Councils or Parish Councils, Cultural Associations, Artists/Promoters, and Schools. The HR (Human Resources) in this project are qualified; they have their physical resources, their own and supported financial and intellectual resources. They consider that the incomes from their creative offer are not adequate to support the costs; the investment assets in the project to date have been low; the high costs of the projects are variables (the value differs according to the activities, the seasons of the year); for the success of the project, there is a need and possibility to invest more. The components of the project that have the most significant cost burden are HR. This project does not have any profit, and they are not happy with the project's economic returns.

The prevalence of Art in Nature project customers in Portuguese since the Covid-19 outbreak. In the pre-pandemic period, they were international. Their likely customers are people interested in artistic culture. This project targets various consumer components based on this age. Considering the client feedback, the motivation for consumers experiencing this project is glimpsing for something distinct; their interest in culture. In 2021 they had fifty-eight customers since they started registering in the Summer months. Currently, they have had thirty-two since the beginning of the year. They have yet to confirm clients for future times because they only know that days before the event. The profile analysis and explanations of their clients only through interaction during experiences.

On a Likert scale, they consider that the demand for their creative tourism offer between January and April 2022 is on level 5. This project has partnerships with tourism companies, City Councils or Parish Councils, and raw material suppliers. Nevertheless, it needs to have national and international journals to advertise and elevate its project. They have qualified HR and economic and intellectual resources. They do not have physical resources. They have their physical resources, their supported economic resources, and their intellectual resources. They believe that the gains from their creative offer are not sufficient yet to subsidize the costs; the investments in the project to date have been low; the main costs of the projects are variables (the value differs according to the activities); for the success of the project, there is a requirement and opportunity to invest more. The project segments with the most significant cost burden are to promote it. This project does not have any profit.

The Discover the Azores photography project customers are mainly native. The clients are people who like photography, their probable clients, and their target audience. The preference for photography is the reason why consumers experience this project, based on their feedback. From the start of their creative tourism project to the present, they have had 41 customers, and they have had one from the beginning of 2022 to the present. This project does not have specified or expected clients in the future times. They study the profile and incentives of their clients through conversations during experiences. Considering the Likert scale, they believe that the demand for their creative tourism offer between the Winter and Spring months of 2022 is mostly on level 3. This project has associations with tourism companies (hotels) but not with City Councils or Parish Councils, national and international journals to promote and elevate their project, and not with raw material suppliers. There is no information available regarding the existing resources in the project (human, physical, financial, intellectual) assume that the incomes from their creative offer are sufficient to keep the costs; the investment in the project to date has been low; This

project has profit, and they are satisfied with the project's returns.

The vast of Mahilawake project customers are Portuguese. Their potential clients are middle/upper-class women. The project's target audience is inquisitive in adventure, travel, and self-development. Considering the client feedback, the motivations for client participation in this project ambition depend on the fact that it is a distinct product in the Azores Region and linked to well-being. From the very beginning of the project to the current moment, they have had 12 clients. They have 4 customers from the beginning of the year 2022. Also, 4 clients are confirmed for the summer activities, and 18 to 20 are expected. They study the profile and motivations of their customers through interactions during experiences. On a Likert scale, they consider that the demand for their creative tourism offer between January and April 2022 is on level 3. This project has collaborations with tourism companies, but not with City Councils or Parish Councils, national and international magazines to publicize and promote their project, and not with raw material suppliers. The human resources in this project are qualified in some aspects and not others; they have any physical resources; the financial resources are their own; the intellectual resources lay on their brand and logo. Furthermore, they believe that the revenues from their creative offer are sufficient to support the costs; the investing investments in the project to date have been low; the main costs of the projects are variables; for the success of the project, there is a need and possibility to invest more. The elements of the project that have the most significant cost burden are physical resources. This project has profit, but they still need to be satisfied with the project's profit.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

About the business model of the five analyzed projects, from the acquired outcomes, it is possible to demonstrate 2 prominent models: 1) for the international tourist (foreign) and 2) for the national and regional tourists (Portuguese). Still, a clear tourist profile pattern appears in both business models: "a tourist that seeks an artistic, rural and

nature-based tourism." These results appear to confirm the actuality in the low-density, isolated and ultra-peripheral regions during the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak, where the tourist looks for such tourism types, [59-65].

Contextually, looking back to the year 2019, it was an amazing period in outcomes provided by tourism for the Azores' ultra-peripheral region. In the Spring of 2020, the world stopped with the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak, and an unprecedented loss of confidence in the tourist market was observed, [66]. However, rural tourism, ecotourism, and several other types of slow tourism that were earning pertinence in the pandemic and after the pandemic crisis period appear to evolve into the new tourism paradigm. So, such specific territories are the most engaging for this new tourism pattern, [63-66]. Also, UNWTO sustains that rural tourism is even more significant once tourists glimpse uncongested destinations with open-air actions during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, [67-70]. Besides, after the pandemic, the European Parliament (EU) has launched several new actions and strategies that should be assumed about tourism sustainability – as is the case of the EU plan for sustainable tourism, [71].

Thereby, the 5 case studies of creative tourism head fit exactly that path way. Thus, it is suggested that the regional administration, local leaders, and other pertinent actors and players in this territory aid and develop techniques to boost these projects (and parallel initiatives) once they not only add to the regional development and destination publicity but also for the so-desired sustainable development and growth. In fact, by these types of tourism, mass tourism is, in theory, avoided. Also, the analyzed creative tourism pilot projects permit regional financial regeneration through the collaborations carried out through these projects with other organizations and regional suppliers.

In concluding thoughts, it is possible to confirm that in this isolated region, the tourism sector was already taking importance since 2019, benefiting from a substantial sample of entrepreneurs and players in the tourism sector in the Autonomous Region of the Azores; besides, the above-mentioned was established by prior thematic investigations, [12, 15, 26].

6 Research Limitations and Future investigation Lines

From the many limitations of this study, it is conceivable to emphasize the undertaking of the testing instruments within the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic period. Because of that specific period, the research team felt some limitations - i.e., in the responses provided by the participants once it was a moment of very apprehension for the tourism sector. However, some of the responses received were vague by such actors. Furthermore, if additional procedures or research methods were used, as is the case of advanced statistics, more understanding was predicted to obtain, as well as if further inquiries were made and if more projects were analyzed. Similarly, if a more comprehensive and diverse sample was used – i.e., including the inhabitants in general, the tourists, the entrepreneurs from other projects, and several other players – it was likely to handle this problem from an abroad point of view. Also, the originality of this study should be stressed, which could be found in its application to the dimensions of the consequences generated by the pilot projects of creative tourism in the Azores Autonomous Region and its connection to future regional growth. Likewise, this investigation can be replicated in other locations and contribute to comparison reflections, stimulating the discussion on this topic and obtaining advancements in the specific literature.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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Appendix

	CDIJA	Refunction Project - GOODBYAZORES	Art in Nature	Discover the Azores through photography	Mahilawake
(1) Are most of your customers local, from Mainland Portugal or foreign?	Foreigners	Foreigners	Foreigners before the pandemic; Portuguese in the pandemic period	All	Portuguese
(2) Do you know who your potential customers are?	Mostly USA citizens	Yes	People interested in artistic culture	People interested in photography	Middle/upper class women
(3) Assess the degree of demand for your creative tourism offer between January and April 2022.	3	2	5	3	3
(4) Do you have partnerships with tourism companies?	Azorean Travel Agency DMC and Cresaçor	Ongoing	Yes	Hotels	Yes
(5) Do you have partnerships with City Councils or Parish Councils?	Not yet	Yes	Yes	No	No
(6) Do you have partnerships with national and international magazines to publicize and promote your project?	IBCCES; Blog: TravelingDifferent.com; Australian magazine called "Travel Without Limits".	No	No	No	No
(7) Do you have partnerships with raw material suppliers?	No	No	Yes	No	No
(8) Have the investments in the project to date been low, moderate, high?	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	Low
(9) Are the main costs of your project fixed (they maintain the same value throughout the year), variable or hybrid?	Variable	Variable	Differs according to activities	No answer	Variable
(10) For the success of your project, is	Yes	Yes	Yes	No answer	Yes

there a need and possibility to invest more?					
(11) What are the elements of your project that have the greatest cost burden? Human resources? The physical resources?	Physical resources	Human resources	Promotion	No answer	Physical resources
(12) Is your project making a profit?	Not at this stage	No	No	Yes	Yes
(13) Are most of your customers local, from Mainland Portugal or foreign?	Foreigners	Foreigners	Foreigners before the pandemic; Portuguese in the pandemic period	All	Portuguese
(14) Do you know who your potential customers are?	Mostly USA citizens	Yes	People interested in artistic culture	People interested in photography	Middle/upper class women
(15) Assess the degree of demand for your creative tourism offer between January and April 2022.	3	2	5	3	3