DESIGN THINKING AS AN APPROACH TO FOSTER RECIFE'S CREATIVE TOURISM

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ABSTRACT
The contemporary traveller wishes, beyond the simple contemplation, to experience and get involved with a city as a local resident. On the other hand, the resident itself often does not know the city deeply and craves to explore this space, seeking for new experiences and the feeling of belonging. How to facilitate the connection between these people and the small entrepreneurs and artists of the city, who, on the flip side, need to offer their services, but suffer from the lack of visibility and incentive? Design emerges here as a tool to enable opportunities and solve problems. The methodology of this research follows an applicable cutout of the creative process of Design Thinking (divided into the phases of inspiration, ideation and implementation) having been worked only on the first phase. This approach encourages the researcher to make the right questions before thinking about giving answers and solutions to a given question. Thus, users are investigated in an empathetic way, in order to understand their real needs, making a critical analysis of the raised data to understand the problems and opportunities. This article reports the investigation of creative tourism in Recife (Brazil) and the application of design processes, aiming to alert to the tourism potential and to guide the development of future projects involving services, which allows a true cultural and affective immersion. The purpose is to bring the designer's performance to the issue, in order to promote memorable experiences for all involved, in addition to local economy development.

KEYWORDS
Experience Tourism, Creative Tourism, Design Thinking, Service Design

1. INTRODUCTION
Tourism, one of the most important sectors in a country's economy, grew above the global economy in 2018, as the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reported in 2019. In a globalized society, where it is possible to move easily and even virtually to other scenarios, the contemporary traveler is increasingly active, well-informed and autonomous when looking for new places to explore as a form of leisure. This individual wants to have experiences beyond the simple knowledge of history and culture, seeking to truly enjoy the destination, making connections and getting involved in the activities of the city as a local. As a reflection of a postmodern society's desire, comes the so-called Creative Tourism, which is not limited to offer tangible resources, such as museums, parks and facilities, and brings innovation through the promotion of original experiences that provide new sensations and emotions, whether tourist or resident.

In this context, we came across Recife’s residents, known for being very "bairroista", a term that refers to those who are vigorously proud and defend their homeland, sometimes considering it the best place in the world. Nevertheless, the expectation that Recife’s residents will get to know their city in depth is not always fulfilled. On the one hand, there is the population's desire to know and explore its hometown, seeking a sense of belonging and identity. On the other hand, there is great tourism potential, but it suffers from lack of visibility and encouragement.

The central question here is how to facilitate the connection between people who want to live an experience and the services offered by small entrepreneurs and artists in the city, to foster Creative Tourism practices in the city. To understand customers, besides investigating their real desires, needs and concerns, it is necessary to map their culture, context and personal experiences, acquiring a holistic view. From that, it is possible to generate alternatives, proposing strategic solutions, aligned with reality, and delivering more value to customers and business. At this point, we find the value of the design, which is seen as an activity
used to drive the processes and systems that underpin experiences, from the strategies and philosophies of the project to the final details of the results. Due to the intangible and interactional nature of services, understanding consumer experience becomes essential (Freire, 2009). In the context of tourism, it is necessary to investigate the traveler's decision-making process in relation to their travel experience.

2. EXPERIENCE ECONOMY AND THE GROWTH OF CREATIVE TOURISM

By the end of the twentieth century, in a context of great social and cultural changes, catalyzed by technology and global mobility, the logic of industrial production is shaped by the needs of modern man (Pardo, 2011). In this Information Era, scholars observe new trends in consumer behavior, which moves from rational interest to emotional involvement.

Some new concepts such as Experience Economy (Pine; Gilmore, 1999) or Dream Society (Jensen, 2000) emerge from this new era. The essence of the terms is focused on offering experiences and emotions, providing individualized experiences, even if based on collaborative processes. In the Experience Economy, intangible aspects are highlighted as valuable, which is based on culture, diversity and originality.

According to the report by Euromonitor International (2019) on consumer trends, clients are looking for genuine products and experiences that allow them to express their individuality. This desire is also manifested in the travel industry. In this context, the consumer is the traveler, who becomes the protagonist of this travel experience that will attach affective value to his life through the experience of unforgettable moments. The economic value of this experience goes beyond building and maintaining customer loyalty, it is set on the appreciation of a significant service, and its ability to be eternal in the user's memory. Yet, according to the World Tourism Organization (1997) the desire of the millennium tourist is traveling to destinations where, more than visiting and contemplating, it is also possible to feel, live, be moved and be a character in your own journey.

From the investigation of this new tourist profile, the term Creative Tourism was coined, first called by Richards & Raymond (2000), who defended the idea that people today are eager for a deeper interaction with the culture of the place they visit, through experiences with the community, expressing their creative skills and feeling like a true local citizen. Richards (2011) further explains that the essence of Creative Tourism seems to be the experiences related to self-realization and self-expression through which tourists become co-interpreters and co-creators as they develop their creative skills. The authenticity of these experiences, as highlighted by the Creative Cities Network of the United Nations - Unesco in 2006, provides a connection between those who visit with those who live, creating spaces of alive culture.

In addition to digital technologies, creativity appears as a tool for identifying and promoting these factors. Reis (2008) calls “creative cities” those that are characterized by continuous innovation processes. These are based on a variety of connections and have in culture a great support for economic and urban changes. Reis defends as a development strategy the transformation of the cities into global creative hubs.

The city of Barcelona was a pioneer in the conception and commercialization of this new idea of tourism, its action plan, developed in 2006, became a model and spurred the creation of the international network for the promotion of creative tourism in 2010, the Creative Tourism Network. In Brazil, experience tourism started in 2006 as an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism and Sebrae (Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service) that implemented the experimental project in Rio Grande do Sul. The purpose was to publicize the wine region. The project was a success and then started to be replicated in other regions. Following this path, the National Creative Tourism Network - Recria was created in 2017, with the purpose of supporting the building of a different idea of tourism, capable of integrating people and creative segments in co-participation processes.

In the Northeast region of Brazil, the first city to organize a public policy aimed at creative tourism was Recife. The Creative Tourism Plan was created in late 2018, in an effort to provoke and provide experiences in which tourists and citizens from Recife feel the city as part of it. This document proposes several work fronts, in order to strengthen the system and make tourism an important economic and social asset for the city. The city of Recife is recognized for its cultural effervescence and richness of rhythms, in addition, in the last decade it started to emerge as an important hub of creative economy, having in Porto Digital, the largest technological park in the country in sales and number of companies. In its current tourist campaign, Recife
calls itself the Capital of Creativity. It is in this scenario that we find the opportunity to explore local tourism from a creative perspective, using design as a tool to identify, spread and sell, priceless experiences to delight the public.

3. DESIGN THINKING AS AN APPROACH TO IDENTIFY INNOVATION

For this study, the Design Thinking methodology was used as the main process. According to Vianna (2012), it is an approach focused on the human being that uses multidisciplinary, collaboration and tangibility of thoughts and processes, to achieve business innovation.

Design Thinking is not a conventional methodology, but a set of methods, which has the characteristics of adaptation to different situations, without imposed rules or defined linearity, a reflection of the current world. The method makes it possible to generate business ideas and practices in a systematic and organized manner. Its efficiency lies in the user-centered approach. To understand customers, besides investigating their real desires, needs and concerns, it is necessary to map their culture, context and personal experiences, acquiring a holistic view. From that, it is possible to generate alternatives, proposing strategic solutions, aligned with reality, and delivering more value to customers and business. According to Brown (2008), Design Thinking is the junction among what is desirable for people, plus what is technologically possible and at the same time feasible for business.

The essence of the designer's role is to know how to balance a project on these three pillars. Feasibility concerns a financially sustainable business model. Viability considers the technical and technological practicability of developing what is being proposed. The differential of design thinking lies in the goal of desirability. According to Clatworthy (2009, apud Stickdorn and Shneider, 2014), desirable interactions generate trust and loyalty to the service, in addition to having a strong emotional appeal. To work with these intangible needs, it is essential to exercise empathy, which, according to Brown (2018), are the attempt to put ourselves in other people's shoes and connect with how they might be feeling.

In the innovation process guided by design, Brown (2018) identifies three spaces for innovation, namely: inspiration, idealization and implementation. The first phase is Immersion, where the problem is identified, taking an approach from different points of view. At that moment, hypotheses are formulated and data are collected to be analyzed and synthesized. After that, relevant information and insight patterns are obtained, which will help in understanding the problem, redefining the project's framework, scope, and limits.

The second phase is the ideation, when collective brainstorming sessions are conducted, among other tools, which contribute to generation of solutions. Brainstorming is a technique to stimulate the generation of a large number of ideas in a short period of time (Vianna et al, 2012). After defining and refining the best ideas, prototypes are created, which help to make these solutions tangible, bringing them from conceptual field to reality. From this, it is possible to run tests with prototypes, in order to validate the effectiveness of solutions, as well as their value for the final customer and business. For Vianna, in this step possibilities are explored so that to optimize concepts through the application of improved co-creation techniques, together with users. Finally, the Implementation phase is the effective operationalization of ideas qualified to be developed. After tests, solutions best suited to the reality of business and which best meet the user's needs are optimized for development.

4. TRIGGER QUESTION, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This article was built from the question about the difficulty of finding tourist experiences in Recife that are outside of the standard route. In other words, how to facilitate the connection between people interested in creative tourist experiences and entrepreneurs who offer these services in Recife. The methodology used and the defined objectives try to answer the question from the bias of Design and its user-oriented problem-solving processes.

The objectives of this study were divided into two parts. First: investigation of the potential of creative tourism of the city and stakeholders needs. Second: Identification of resident's pains when looking for and decision making about tours in the city; identifying the problems of small entrepreneurs who work with creative tourism in Recife; investigation of existing creative tourism initiatives in the city.
In order to achieve objectives, three stages were defined throughout the research. The first managed with the literature review on “creative tourism” and surrounding areas. Second one was an exploratory research on the market situation in the city of Recife, increasing significant data to reinforce and support the study's interpretations and analyzes. Finally, surveys were applied splitting into three groups: consumers of Recife's tourist experiences, local creative tourism entrepreneurs and managers of the Recife Department of Tourism.

Regarding the approach, a mixed quantitative-qualitative research was applied. The survey conducted with consumers of Recife's tourist experiences was carried out using structured questionnaires with 14 questions. The survey was sent online to more than 200 participants and reached a total of 152 completed forms. Among entrepreneurs and stakeholders from City Hall, a model of structured interviews with 6 questions was adopted, involving a total of 12 respondents. The goal was to investigate how creative tourism initiatives are being managed and its main obstacles, in addition to discovering how current management's positioning on this.

After the research phase, gathered data were evaluated and synthesized, based on the identification of patterns, using charts and statistical analysis, in addition to triangulation of information considered relevant to some questions. The results present theories formulated from the identified phenomena, which help in understanding the problem, redefining the framework, scope and limits of performance of a potential project.

5. RESULTS

The research involved 164 participants, of which 93% belong to the group that includes users of tourist experiences in the city and the rest belonging to the category of creative entrepreneurs and government officials. The latter group encompasses workers who work in management, planning, events, sports, quality, development and consultancy in the Department of Tourism, Sport and Leisure in Recife.

In the first group, focus was on city residents, who enjoy leisure and tourism services in the city. The total public was made up of people of legal age, 74% of whom were between 18 and 30 years old. Regarding gender, 75% of respondents identified themselves as being female.

The survey showed that for 70% of consumers, the Internet search engine, such as Google and Yahoo!, are the main source of information about different tourist activities, while 66% of respondents said they also look for referrals from people they know.

Only 18% of users consider themselves to be tourists in their own city. Most of them, 69% of respondents, stated that the frequency of going out to explore their city is low, being motivated by the desire to do something different or by invitations from friends or relatives. On the other hand, only 1 person out of 152 stated that he has no interest at all in getting to know the city better.

![Figure 1. Decisive factors when making decisions about doing something new in the city](Image)
Respondents reported important factors to consider when deciding whether to do something for the first time in the city (Figure 1). The most important items were: Cost (68%), Security (67%) and Referrals from friends (51%). Among the respondents over 46 years old, 95% reported the importance of the Ease/practicality factor to use or book a service, thus being an essential item for older consumers. The Distance factor is taken into account by 36% and Comfort by 27% of the respondents. It is possible to notice that an important portion of people prefer to explore nearby places, where they are used to, whether it is their home or workplace, an evidence of why these people do not know the entire region of their city well, along with the problem of insecurity reported. Another point that may contribute to this issue is the lack of referrals given by acquaintances to visit these different and distant places, since this has been pointed out as an important factor for people to consider going to. This question arises not only in the motivation to go to an unknown place, but also in the moment of discovering the options available in the city, being therefore a significant point to take into account when publicizing and offering services.

In order to investigate familiarity with the use of online platforms for searching and booking tours, the research points out that Airbnb and Tripadvisor are the most popular services, used by 68% and 65% of people, respectively. The survey also found people's perception of the amount and diversity of tourist experiences in Recife. Revealing more than half of consumers said that there are not many options, confirming the hypothesis that there is a huge lack of knowledge about the alternatives that the city offers.

The poll also showed that most respondents consume the same types of tourist experience. When it came to choosing the coolest and unique option that was experienced, most common options are mentioned: Museums and Art Galleries (47%), Historic Center (40%), Beach (39.5%), Boat trips (36%), Public Market (32%) and Gastronomic Experiences (29%). The survey revealed an interesting data, which is 22% of users chose Bicycle tours as the most pleasant leisure, showing a possible potential in the city. Only 4% of the answers mentioned walking tours, photographic tours and visits to the Technological Pole (Porto Digital) as the nicest experiences, revealing a probable unknowledge of these existent possibilities by the public. 54% of people indicated that Festivals (music, gastronomy, cinema, theater, etc.) were the most enjoyable experience, signaling a potential to be explored and at the same time a predilection for events, which bring variety to the routine programming of a city.

About the knowledge of Creative Tourism concept, more than 75% of respondents understand it as “Alternative tours outside standard tourist route”. A portion of 42% stated that the concept involves “Learning/exercising some skill related to local culture and activities”, an alternative that is seldom mentioned in the respondents' experience, when it comes to the memory of their best experiences.

Although aware of the concept, 75% of respondents have never heard of Creative Tourism in Recife. This result reflects a vast lack of knowledge of the city's potential by the residents themselves, consequently unexplored by visitors as well. It can be concluded that the city should work hard on this issue, considering that it recently received the international title of "City of Creative Tourism", recognized by the Creative Tourism Network.

The survey also showed that 81% of users have already used a social network to find out about leisure options in Recife, indicating a strong channel to be explored in publicity. About tips and recommendations to friends and acquaintances, 95% of users indicate what they already know. This trend can limit the spread of new and different options, which shows the importance of knowledge about your own city. Only 1% recommended searching for guides and official information at the Tourist Assistance Center. Finally, the research investigated the degree of interest in an online platform aimed at different tourist experiences in Recife, pointing to a positive result of more than 90% chance of use by users.

Analyzing the interviews with the agents of the Tourism Department of Recife, attention was drawn to the importance of creating a public policy focused on the creative tourism sector and the existence of governance working in the area together with the National Creative Tourism Network. This initiative contributed to the creation of the Municipal Creative Tourism Plan, elaborated in a co-creative way with participation of the local community. The result of it can be seen in conquest of the international title of Creative City, granted by the Creative Tourism Network. Among the basic criteria required for this recognition are the identification of at least ten creative tourism experiences in the city and a website that promotes it. Although internationally recognized, the research shows that the majority of local customers are still unaware of the work of Creative Tourism in Recife.
Eyes on the future, 71% of respondents highlighted the need to follow up on the actions proposed in Recife’s Creative Tourism Plan is essential. Therefore, it is necessary to act to strengthen the governance created and guarantee execution of the plan. The publicity of ongoing actions also requires attention, in order to establish as a reference in the area, both at the level of local, national and international tourism.

Regarding the identification of the sector's demands, the answers display a pattern about the importance of giving voice to the population through promotion of actions which allows the meeting of these groups. Mobilizations contributed to different areas of the city, engaging public schools and local organizations. In other words, the public sector is open to demands of the community, attentive to what may become part of this chain and bringing the user to the center of the issue. In addition, there is also exploratory research mapping emerging creative tourism experiences.

The public sector is assisting those initiatives by raising awareness of Creative Tourism, investing in dissemination and promotion of the initiatives created. Besides, there is incentive and support for qualification, through mentoring, training and distance courses.

Although the number of interviews with local entrepreneurs was below the expectations, it was possible to identify patterns of responses that deserve attention and reflection. The converging points were: Difficulty in attracting the local public, which can offer permanent demand for products and services, in opposite of external tourism, which is seasonal and limited; reach specific public interested in their services, since access to foreign agencies is limited. Other essential actions are the investigation and understanding of its target audience and the creation of a network involving different actors in creative tourism, with the aim of identifying new demands. Finally, the analysis of user satisfaction is a measure taken by all respondents. Providing an open channel of communication with the customer is essential to understand them better and improve services.

6. CONCLUSION

The era of Experience Economy brought an important reflection on the role of designers, expanding their professional performance in the process of planning services focused on creative tourism. The designers must see beyond the object and bring discussions about the quality of consumers’ use experience, whether in the use of a product or service. Thus, it is necessary to deepen the study about the user, to better understand their pains, needs and satisfactions. In the field of tourism, the user of the modern era becomes a demanding traveler, more explorer and in search of immersive and real experiences.

This work sought to contribute to the perception of Creative Tourism for the city of Recife. Through the designer perspective, the Recife tourism context and the actors involved in this process were investigated in order to raise opportunities for new business and improvements in the current scenario. It was possible to assess the relationship between the theory and the points raised in the research.

The research worked on three fronts of investigation in order to cross the views and facts of different audiences involved and get a better understanding of the creative tourism chain and its barriers. The residents and tourists of the city of Recife were interviewed, the so-called “experience consumers”, also the agents of the public sector and finally the creative entrepreneurs. It was not possible to reach the expectations of the research regarding the results of the last group, due to the number of respondents reached.

The results show that Recife advanced in the area of Creative Tourism, articulated by public investments and the emergence of small local enterprises, yet, there is a long way to go. A good part of the public, especially the local tourists, are unaware of the opportunities and tourist activities in the city, in addition, they are not used to going out frequently and seeking new places. There is, however, interest and availability by a good part of the users.

Regardless, it is necessary to point out some aspects that have proved to be of great importance for the consumer of local tourism. The question of cost and safety are essential factors for more than two thirds of the interviewees. The holding of cultural and artistic festivals and events can greatly contribute to dissemination and growth of tourism in Recife. Beyond that, it is important to promote dissemination made by the users themselves, including bloggers and local influencers, since it was found that only 1% of people search for official information in the Tourist Assistance Centers.

From the point of view of creative tourism managers and entrepreneurs, it became evident the need for the actions proposed in the Municipal Plan for Creative Tourism to be implemented and improved over time.
The actions operate on several fronts; how to disseminate knowledge about the concept; professional qualification program; encouraging improvements in infrastructure; implementation of a marketing program; and the establishment of a management council to supervise and advise the plan. In addition, bearing the title of City of Creative Tourism, as part of the International Creative Tourism Network, the local government should be committed to maintaining the promotion as a destination for creative tourism, through a strong digital presence, international campaigns, organization of events, and cetera.

The moment is favorable to invest in a business in the area of creative tourism. It is necessary to awaken the resident's gaze to local experiences, either on the side of which they want to invest in the business, or from the perspective of the consumer of the experiences. For future work, the objective is to extend the research procedure with entrepreneurs, conducting interviews in person. Besides that, conduct collaborative brainstorming sessions uniting entrepreneurs and users. Thus, it is possible to collect more meaningful insights and go deeper in the identification of needs. Accessing more data, the next step to be taken would be the ideation phase, using design process tools such as creating personas, empathy map, user journey map, etc., to guide the project design. The role of the designer is of great importance in the development of a project that integrates all this potential and strengthens the city as a recognized destination for creative tourism.

REFERENCES