

Exploring creative tourism on quality of life of older artisans: The case of Loulé Criativo

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Objectives | Creative tourism, an extension of cultural tourism, has gained prominence for its ability to engage tourists actively in cultural and creative activities within a destination (Richards & Raymond, 2000). This paper explores the impact of creative tourism on the quality of life (QoL) of older master artisans, a group often overlooked in empirical studies. Creative tourism's four pillars, including active involvement, creative self-expression, cultural heritage connection, and community engagement, are key features that set it apart from traditional mass cultural tourism (Bakas & Duxbury, 2018). While previous research has examined the economic, cultural, and community development aspects of creative tourism (Bakas, 2021; Duxbury, 2021; Gonçalves et al., 2020), there is a notable gap in understanding its influence on the QoL of local communities, particularly older artisans (Walsh et al., 2017).

Artisans are the most representative workers in creative tourism by offering authentic experiences that showcase their craftsmanship and cultural traditions (Teixeira & Ferreira, 2019). In the context of creative tourism, artisans serve as cultural ambassadors, sharing their knowledge, stories, and heritage with visitors. Moreover, artisans often play a vital role in destination branding and marketing efforts. Their artisanal products, ranging from handmade ceramics to traditional textiles, serve as tangible expressions of local identity and heritage, acting as potent symbols of the destination's authenticity and uniqueness (Teixeira & Ferreira, 2019). This benefit of artisans to creative tourism is reciprocal considering that creative tourism initiatives often contribute to the economic development of communities by providing income-generating opportunities for artisans and supporting small-scale enterprises (Bakas, 2021; Bakas & Duxbury, 2018).

While specific demographic data on artisans in the creative tourism field is not readily available, certain sources shed light on their age distribution. For instance, the CREATOUR¹ documentary, titled

¹ The CREATOUR project, initiated in 2016 and concluded in 2019, was an interdisciplinary research and application endeavour conducted in Portugal. Its primary objective was to establish the foundation for a creative tourism network in the Norte, Alentejo, Algarve, and Centro regions of Portugal. As part of the

'creatour.pt - creative tourism in Portugal,' and anthropological studies (e.g., Goody, 2001) suggest that a considerable portion of artisans are older adults. The documentary highlights that many creative tourism workshops, particularly those in rural areas, are conducted by individuals aged 65 and above. The explanation behind this is that older people play a crucial role as custodians of ancient values, traditions, and handicraft techniques. Moreover, Goody's (2001) anthropological study also supports the notion of older individuals occupying a central position in preserving handicrafts and cultural heritage. They are seen as the bearers of age-old traditions and ancestral techniques, which they aim to impart to younger generations. This was confirmed by all staff managers included in this study, when they said that "master artisans (...) are the carrying stones of culture and traditions", and that they are the "main actors of creative tourism activities (...) and tourists' attraction". To further illustrate this point, according to information derived from the Red Book of the Artisans of the Algarve (CCDR, 2021), 97 out of 207 local artisans (47%) were aged 65 or above. This data suggests that the artisans who participate in creative tourism activities in Portugal are mostly older adults.

In this regards, the benefits of creative tourism have been identified by several studies. For example, the prominent benefits of creative tourism in the rural or remote areas are mostly related with rejuvenating the places and spatial design, promoting the traditional way of life, tangible and intangible assets, the economic sustainability of local artisans, job creation for creative people, and social or community cohesion/engagement, which are mainly collective impacts (Bakas & Duxbury, 2018; Bakas, Duxbury, & de Castro, 2019; Bakas, Duxbury, Remoaldo, et al., 2019; Keller & Velibeyoğlu, 2021; Richards, 2019, 2020). Nevertheless, the contribution of CT to the QoL of those involved in the provision of this type of tourism has not been explored, particularly with respect to artisans.

When the relationship between creative tourism and QoL is explored, it is mainly done indirectly, and the focus is mostly on residents. A study conducted in India recognized that creative tourism has the potential to improve the QoL of residents and visitors (Sharma, 2015). Another study conducted in a local community in Thailand (Wisansing et al., 2019) aimed at co-creating a monitoring tool for measuring the effects of creative tourism activities on the community's well-being, found that the key positive outcomes of creative tourism on QoL were enhanced health, job creation and equal income generation, family bonds and happiness, clean and greener environment, transparency and democracy, and management and leadership skills.

There is also a study conducted in rural areas of Cambodia that came to the conclusion that the key aspects of successful creative tourism activities are building QoL for local communities, holding a long-term vision, developing an identity/image, collaboration with the stakeholders, and using public space to host creative activities (Baixinho et al., 2020). It is also important to mention a study that

project, a total of 40 creative tourism workshops were organized, predominantly led by local artisans (Duxbury et al., 2021).

discusses place-making practices on which some forms of creative tourism rely on, and highlighting its role in improving urban environments and residents' QoL (Sofield et al., 2017). However, we did not find literature that specifically focuses on the contribution of creative tourism to artisans' QoL. To comprehensively measure the impact of creative tourism on the QoL of older artisans, we draw upon a comprehensive framework of QoL dimensions established by a thematic synthesis study on older people's QoL (van Leeuwen et al., 2019). This framework encompasses nine domains that reflect the multifaceted nature of QoL in older individuals. These domains are as follows:

1. Autonomy: The ability to manage independently, maintain dignity, and avoid feeling like a burden.
2. Role and activity: Engaging in activities that bring a sense of value, joy, and involvement.
3. Health perception: Feeling healthy and unencumbered by physical limitations.
4. Relationships: Cultivating close relationships that provide support and a sense of significance.
5. Attitude and adaptation: Maintaining a positive outlook on life and embracing adaptability.
6. Emotional comfort: Experiencing inner peace and emotional well-being.
7. Spirituality: Nurturing feelings of attachment, faith, and self-development through beliefs, rituals, and inner reflection.
8. Home and neighbourhood: Feeling secure at home and residing in a pleasant and accessible neighbourhood.
9. Financial security: Avoiding feelings of restriction due to financial circumstances.

Key research questions include whether the participation of older artisans in creative tourism activities positively affects their QoL, in which dimensions of QoL creative tourism makes a positive contribution, and how their involvement promotes their QoL. Additionally, the study seeks to identify reasons if creative tourism does not operate in this manner for older artisans. Given that older artisans often hold traditional knowledge and craftsmanship that they pass on to the next generation through creative tourism initiatives, this research is vital. By uncovering the potential of creative tourism in enhancing the QoL of older master artisans, researchers aim to develop evidence-based strategies and targeted programs that address the unique needs and aspirations of this demographic. This research endeavour strives to pave the way for inclusive and enriching creative tourism initiatives that contribute to the QoL of older individuals participating as master artisans.

Methodology | For this research, we chose to employ a qualitative exploratory case study approach (Baxter & Jack, 2008), with a particular focus on Loulé Criativo Turismo Network, referred to as Loulé Criativo. Portugal was selected as the ideal research location due to its strong emphasis on creative tourism initiatives, exemplified by projects like the CREATOUR project, which actively promote

cultural identity and immersive experiences for visitors (Duxbury, 2021). The research does not aim to establish causal relationships but rather seeks to understand the processes and mechanisms related to creative tourism and its impact on older artisans' QoL. Data collection methods include semi-structured interviews with 17 participants, consisting of older artisans aged 65 and above and professionals from Loulé Criativo. Those older artisans engaged in the study actively participate in workshops designed to pass down their craft to future generations as part of creative tourism initiatives. Additionally, they host workshops catering to tourists and enthusiasts eager to learn handicraft techniques. Beyond teaching, these artisans also showcase and sell their creations.

The interviews with both older artisans and managers cover various topics, such as demographic information, engagement in creative tourism activities, and changes in QoL. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated when necessary. Additionally, participant observation was employed during field visits to creative tourism workshops and artisan shops to further enrich the data and enhance research credibility (Golafshani, 2003). Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained from participants.

The collected data was qualitatively analysed using the Framework Analysis method (Ritchie et al., 2014), a systematic approach to thematic analysis. Research data were analysed using NVIVO software. The analysis process encompassed several distinct stages, beginning with the initial familiarization with the data, followed by the construction of an initial thematic framework. Subsequently, the data was systematically indexed and sorted, enabling the identification of emerging themes and patterns. The analytical process continued with the review of data extracts, summarization, and visual representation of the data. Categories were constructed to encapsulate key themes, and linkages between categories were identified to understand the interconnections within the dataset. Throughout the analytical process, the research team followed a collaborative approach, with the first author initially conducting an analysis of a subset of the data. This subset analysis was subsequently reviewed and assessed by the other authors to establish a consensus on the analytical procedures. Once consensus was achieved, the first author proceeded to analyse the entire dataset, consistently seeking support and feedback from the other authors to ensure rigor and reliability in the analysis process.

Main Results and Contributions | The research findings demonstrate a significantly positive impact of creative tourism on the QoL of older artisans. Both managerial staff and older artisans acknowledged this positive effect across six out of the nine examined QoL dimensions. However, in three dimensions, participants did not provide explicit positive or negative statements regarding the impact of creative tourism. Specifically, the dimensions of health perception, role and activity, relationships, attitude and adaptation, and financial security showed significant improvements in QoL, as indicated by 100 percent participation from both groups. In contrast, the autonomy dimension had a small number of participants who did not explicitly state any positive or negative

contribution of creative tourism. Additionally, three dimensions—emotional comfort, home and neighbourhood, and spirituality—were addressed by only one or no participants, suggesting that these aspects received less emphasis in relation to creative tourism's impact on QoL. The data collected from older artisans and managerial staff reveal that creative tourism enhances the QoL of older artisans through various means. Different categories demonstrate multiple ways in which creative tourism influences QoL in specific dimensions, such as role and activity, financial security, and relationships. However, certain dimensions, like autonomy and emotional comfort, show singular impacts.

This significantly positive impact of on the QoL of older artisans, as evidenced in this study, can be attributed to several key mechanisms inherent to CT experiences. These mechanisms include active involvement, creative self-expression, a connection to cultural heritage, community engagement, and valuing the traditions and crafts. CT offers participants the opportunity for active engagement, both physically and mentally, in the creative process (Bakas & Duxbury, 2018). Older artisans actively participate in CT activities, which can include teaching traditional arts, demonstrating crafts, or engaging in collaborative projects. This active involvement fosters a sense of purpose and fulfilment, contributing to improvements in dimensions like role and activity and attitude and adaptation in the QoL assessment. CT also provides a platform for creative self-expression, enabling participants to express their unique creativity during the experiences (Bakas & Duxbury, 2018). Older artisans have the chance to showcase their artistic skills and knowledge, which can positively impact their self-esteem and emotional well-being, as reflected in the improvements in dimensions such as attitude and adaptation. Additionally, CT experiences often emphasize a strong connection to the destination's cultural heritage and traditions (Bakas & Duxbury, 2018). Older artisans, who are often keepers of traditional knowledge and craftsmanship, can actively participate in preserving and sharing this heritage. This connection to cultural roots enhances their sense of identity and belonging, positively influencing dimensions such as relationships and emotional comfort. Lastly, CT fosters community engagement, highlighting the vital role of local communities in actively participating in and benefiting from creative activities (Bakas & Duxbury, 2018). Older artisans become integral members of these communities, building social bonds and support networks, which are essential for dimensions like relationships and financial security in the assessment of QoL. When we look at the financial security dimension, it is found that creative tourism increases the market value of cultural items and products. This increased market value has helped to increase the prices of the products and increase the income levels of the older artisans who used to sell their products below their value. In summary, the multifaceted nature of CT, encompassing active involvement, creative self-expression, cultural heritage connection, valuing the crafts and traditions, and community engagement, collectively contributes to the significantly positive impact of CT on the QoL of older artisans, as observed in this study.

Overall, this study contributes by providing empirical evidence of the positive impact of creative tourism on the QoL of older artisans, a demographic often overlooked in research. Conducted in the specific context of Loulé Criativo, it examines nine QoL dimensions and incorporates both artisan and managerial perspectives. The research identifies specific dimensions, such as health perception, role and activity, relationships, attitude and adaptation, and financial security, that are positively influenced by creative tourism. These findings offer practical insights for developing tailored creative tourism initiatives that enhance the well-being of older artisans, addressing a notable research gap and informing policy decisions and program design in the fields of tourism, cultural preservation, and community development.

Limitations | During the course of this study, several limitations were acknowledged. First, the relatively small sample size raises concerns about the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, there's a possibility that professional respondents may not fully capture social exclusion experiences, potentially introducing bias. The decision to work with a small sample was influenced by the limited existing research in the field, which highlights a potential limitation in the available literature. Nevertheless, it's crucial to recognize that the elderly individuals studied had unique experiences and first-hand insights into social dynamics due to their previous involvement in street vending, justifying the focus on this specific demographic. However, this narrow focus could introduce selection bias and limit the study's applicability to other groups. Future research could delve deeper into the challenges and opportunities faced by older artisans in engaging with creative tourism, offering valuable insights for designing inclusive and sustainable tourism practices, especially considering the increased emphasis on community engagement, well-being, and sustainability in the post-COVID-19 era. This research highlights the importance of creative tourism in improving the QoL of local communities, underscoring its significance for future developments in the field.

Conclusions | This study qualitatively examined whether, and how, working as an older artisan in CT contributes to a better QoL. Thus, this article makes contributions (for theory and social intervention) to two distinct scientific fields: creative tourism and social gerontology.

With respect to the contribution for the field of CT, the findings show that older artisans gain in terms of QoL by working in the creative tourism segment. Evidence was provided of the transformative potential of creative tourism in providing meaningful experiences and fostering personal growth. This demonstrates that creative tourism not only contributes to the sustainability of communities and territories (system-level impacts), but also to the QoL of its workforce (individual-level impacts), an aspect neglected by previous studies, as we had the opportunity to mention. This is relevant from a theoretical/conceptual point of view, as it draws attention, on the one hand, to the need of expanding the levels of analysis of CT impacts, including not only impacts at the systemic level but also impacts at the individual level and, on the other hand, for the relevance of considering

the impacts at the individual level among different actors in the CT, including not only tourists and residents, but also the workers in this segment of tourism.

Secondly, this article contributes to clarify what is specific about artisan work in CT that promotes wellness and QoL. There was a consensus among staff managers and older artisans that working in the CT promotes QoL through an essential mechanism: the social appreciation of the role of older artisans in preserving ancestral crafts (sense of value). The main purpose of creative tourism, which involves transmitting knowledge to younger generations (Richards and Raymond, 2000), plays a pivotal role in fostering this sense of value among older artisans. In addition to the sense of value, this study revealed other processes/mechanisms through which artisanal work in CT promotes the QoL of its older artisans, which distinguish this type of tourism from other types. The sense of value and the other mechanisms identified above associated with working in CT also promote the social inclusion of older artisans and, in turn, social inclusion has positive impacts in QoL (Akdemir et al., 2023). In all, this reveals that artisanal work in CT generates several non-tangible/non-material outcomes (sense of value feeling active, feeling healthy, etc.) that contribute to promoting the QoL of artisans, in this case, older artisans. This is another theoretical/conceptual contribution of this study to the field of CT.

Regarding the contribution of this study to the field of social gerontology, it is worth highlighting the identification of several processes/mechanisms that positively impact the QoL of older adults who are involved in craft work. In addition to the intrinsic value of identifying these processes/mechanisms, it is also important to emphasize that they allow us to infer that the QoL benefits of being active in later life do not come mainly (or not only) from physical activity and financial gain, as some of the versions of the active aging paradigm advocate (de São José et al., 2014; Timonen, 2016) but rather (or also) of the subjective experience arising from the work itself (e.g. feeling involved, feeling healthy) or interactions with others (sense of value). This draws attention to the need to include dimensions in the conceptualization of active aging that go beyond the physical and productivity dimensions.

The findings of this study also suggest that working in the CT can be seen as a valid social intervention to promote social inclusion and the QoL of older adults, and to combat ageism that hinders their life opportunities. CT can be seen as a privileged site to implement an involvement-led approach to working with older people, which is based on the belief "that regardless of age and impairment, older people have the potential and motivation to grow and develop their capacities and make a valuable contribution to others" (Hoban et al., 2013), and we would add "to the community and society at large".

During the data collection process, there were some limitations. The language barrier was a significant challenge, as interviews with older artisans were conducted in Portuguese and later translated into English, possibly resulting in a loss of meaning. Furthermore, all interviews occurred while artisans were actively engaged in weaving palms, restricting the scope of discussions.

Additionally, due to COVID-related restrictions and the age of some artisans, three participants were unable to participate, with a majority of participants being female (9 participants) in gender distribution.

The article significantly advances our understanding of the relationship between creative tourism activities and the QoL outcomes for older artisans. Through its identification of key mechanisms, dimensions, and contextual factors influencing QoL enhancement, it sets a foundation for future research to delve deeper into the transformative potential of creative tourism in fostering well-being and QoL. However, while this study offers valuable insights, it also underscores the need for further investigation into the specific impacts of creative tourism provision on the QoL of its providers. Future research should aim to explore which dimensions of QoL benefit most from creative tourism activities and examine the varying experiences among older artisans to determine the factors contributing to differential outcomes.

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