Empirical Research on **Creative Tourism**: A Systematic Review

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Abstract | The empirical research on creative tourism (CT) is expanding, having already reached a considerable maturity. Nevertheless, there is no detailed "map" of the empirical research on CT, which provide us thorough information on various aspects that structure it, such as research methods, settings and participants, and main themes addressed in the conclusions. This systematic review aims to provide such a "map", critically discussing it and making some recommendations for future research. Relevant publications were searched in EBSCO, Web of Science, and Science Direct electronic databases on 3rd of February 2021. All peer-reviewed, English, Portuguese and Spanish articles, published since 2000, re-porting empirical studies explicitly focused on CT were included. Amongst them, 60 were eligible for this review. The results shows that empirical research on CT still has some shortcomings that compromise its level of maturity. To reach higher levels of maturity, this research needs to overcome its excessive focus on the management of CT, its fixation around the initial definition of CT, and to break with the circumscription to urban and local settings and the scarce inclusion of artisans/artists and residents as research participants. From a methodological point of view, it is also important to invest in more complex/in-depth analyses.

Keywords | Creative tourism, systematic literature review, tourism and creativity

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1. Introduction

Creative tourism (CT), a type of tourism where travellers immerse themselves in the daily life of tourism destination and co-create the tourism products through their active participation, has emerged as an extension of cultural tourism (Richards & Raymond, 2000). Due to its key features such as creativity, active participation, and integration in community, CT has been increasingly used in the academic and practical spheres. For example, it has been integrated in the theoretical ground of some contemporary movements such as sustainability (UNESCO, 2006) or social integrity (Couret, 2020), and it has been viewed as a strong tool for implementing a development strategy for benefiting local communities (Corá & Henriques, 2021). Thus, we can say that although CT is a relatively young concept, it has been applied and disseminated by policy makers, practitioners, international networks, and researchers from various disciplines (Duxbury & Richards, 2019).

There is a consensus in the literature that CT is an emerging and evolving field of research, as the studies on this topic have grown and diversified significantly recently. This created the need to carry out several literature reviews, many of them with the main concern of explaining what is meant by creativity when applied to tourism (e.g., Carvalho et al., 2019; Duxbury & Richards, 2019; Richards, 2011). In addition, these reviews clarify the stages and main drivers of the CT literature, the emergence of the "creative turn"in tourism studies and the criticisms of CT (Duxbury & Richards, 2019; Richards, 2011). These are essential literature reviews for anyone interested in the topic. Other literature reviews focus on CT in specific domains/contexts, such as cities (Richards, 2014), islands (Baixinho et al., 2020) and small places (Richards, 2019). These reviews are also relevant to anyone interested in these specific domains.

The literature reviews mentioned above are traditional/narrative reviews, i.e. reviews that provide an overview of the literature, mainly of the theoretical literature (e.g., Carvalho et al., 2019). Other reviews are bibliometric, one focused on the relationship between CT and local development (Pimenta et al., 2021) and another with the broader objective of "understanding the main research topics and approaches, theoretical foundations, and the most recent areas of investigation"(Galvagno & Giaccone, 2019, p. 1256). Through the use of co-citation analysis, content analysis, and bibliographic coupling, this review (Galvagno & Giaccone, 2019) concluded that "creativity and experience" are the "two objects of analysis" of the field of CT, and that "the supply-side and the demand-side" are the "two levels of analysis" (p.1274). It also concluded that "tourist experience and co-creation, creativity in tourism, and cultural tourism and events" are the "main research topics", and that the "co-creation and experience economy" are the "two main theoretical approaches" (p.1274). Finally, it identified "some research trends: creativity and cultural tourism; creativity and local development; creativity and urban tourism; creative tourist experience; co-creation of tourist experience" (p.1274).

All these literature reviews are an undeniable contribution to the understanding and consolidation of the research field of CT. However, they are not comprehensive enough, as they only focus on some aspects while neglecting others. We already have a good understanding of the genesis and development trajectory of research on CT, as well as a good clarification of the concept, but we still do not have systematized information on other aspects that are part of the structure of this research field, such as research methods, research settings and participants, and main conclusions. Even the reviews that tried to give an overview of empirical research on CT (e.g., Galvagno & Giaccone, 2019) do not sufficiently account for the enormous diversity of research topics, and research methods and conclusions.

To sum up, despite the indisputable usefulness of the existing literature reviews on CT, we still do not have a detailed "map" of empirical research on CT, which accounts not only for theoretical/conceptual aspects, but also for other important aspects, such as research methods, research settings and participants, main conclusions, and main limitations/gaps. In our view, such a "map" is crucial to "know where we are" in the development process of empirical research, and this help us to consider "where we can go" in the future. In this vein, this review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the empirical literature on CT, by getting answers to the following specific questions:

(1) What lines of research have been developed in this empirical literature?

(2) What are the theoretical/conceptual underpinnings of each line of research?

(3) What are the research settings and research participants of each line of research?

(4) What research methods and techniques were used in each line of research?

(5) What are the main themes addressed in the conclusions of each line of research?

(6) What are the main reported limitations of the studies in each line of research?

We expect that the results of this review, its critical discussion and recommendations for future research provide a clear guidance. We also expect that this review can also be useful for practitioners and policymakers interested in CT.

2. Creative Tourism: Conceptual framework

The concept of creative industries emerged in the twenty-first century as a solution to the massification of the cultural industry (Vickery, 2015).

From a broader picture, this concept was proposed as a response to the transition from an "*industrial society*" to a "*creative society*" (Richards & Raymond, 2000). This creative transformation was an instrument for the rise of the creative economy and new consumption trends (Richards & Wilson, 2007). In a short period of time, many big cities started to compete to attract "the creative class" (Florida, 2014) and increase their level of creativity. To achieve that, they started to include creativeness in cultural and economic policies and created opportunities for new investments (Richards & Wilson, 2006). In the tourism sphere, these new trends were reflected in the development of CT. The original definition of CT was made by Greg Richards and Crispin Raymond (2000, p. 19) as:

"Tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken".

As can be understood from this definition, according to Richards and Wilson (2004), creative tourism offers visitors the opportunity to interact with the symbolic value of a destination, which refers to the production and consumption of symbolic goods and services such as culture, heritage, and identity of the tourism destination, as it involves the active and creative participation of tourists in the daily life of local people. In this sense, creative tourism is seen as a way of increasing the symbolic value of a destination and creating innovative and authentic forms of cultural capital. In this context, creative tourism is seen as an alternative to attract a new type of tourist who is interested in meaningful and transformative experiences rather than mass-produced and standardised experiences. In fact, according to Richards (2020), creative tourism practices have an important role in increasing the reputation of a destination in the

symbolic economy.

As a response to the changing economic and social trends, CT has started its conceptualization as an extension of cultural tourism. According to Duxbury and Richards (2019), it is possible to summarize the evolution of the CT concept in four stages. As can be understood from the first definition of CT (Richards and Raymond, 2000), the first phase, "creative tourism 1.0", refers to the co-creation and co-learning nature of tourism activities in a small-scale basis. The conceptual process moved to "creative tourism 2.0" with the development of web-based portals and marketing strategies to reach more consumers (Duxbury & Richards, 2019). In this stage, CT is conceptualized according to the three levels of creativity that can be adapted to tourism, these are "*creative spectacles, creative spaces, and creative tourism*" (Richards & Wilson, 2006). The third stage, "creative tourism 3.0", started right after UNESCO defined the concept in 2006, since cities started to have a rising interest to become "creative cities" to increase their competitiveness (Duxbury and Richards, 2019). The relationship between tourism and creative experiences became broader and more valued by the economy and enterprises. Hence, this interest and the technological advancements in the market became leverage for the spread of creativity in tourism (Richards, 2014). The cities started to include creativity in their cultural and tourism strategies/policies, which means that the entrepreneurial and economic opportunities were advanced in the field. In 2012, the concept was already in the 4th stage of its evolution which refers to the integration of "*relational tourism*" and "*networking*" concepts into CT (Duxbury & Richards, 2019). In this stage, the scholars emphasized the role of local community and artisans, the role of collective work, and the engagement of tourists with locals on value creation (Richards, 2014). Furthermore,

with the rising findings on the benefits of CT, it has also started to be seen as an opportunity for a small city or remote area development. For example, in the ambit of the Portuguese project entitled CREATOUR[1], which implements CT projects to develop tourism in remote areas and small cities, CT has started to be seen as a local level sustainable development solution for the peripheral areas (Richards, 2019).

If we attempt to evaluate the way ahead after the 4th phase of CT, we may expect that CT continue its conceptual development with the influence of later social movements described as "*turns*" in literature. The first one is the "social turn" that was addressed by De Bruin and Jelinčić (2016). These authors advocate that tourism practices were experiencing a "social turn" after the concepts such as "*consciousness*", "*shared values*", "*co-creation*" and "*tolerance*" were introduced into the literature. The second turn we should consider is the "*inclusive turn*" identified recently by Couret (2020). According to this author, CT might have the necessary features to ensure the inclusive and human-oriented tourism product designs (Duxbury et al., 2021), which also can be seen as a solution to the problems of tourism in the post-Covid environment.

3. Methods

This systematic review was guided by the last version of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Page, McKenzie, et al., 2021; Page, Moher, et al., 2021).

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[1]CREATOUR (Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areas) is an incubator/demonstration and multidisciplinary research initiative, supporting collaborative research processes that was funded under the Joint Activities Programme of Portugal 2020, by Compete 2020, POR Lisboa, POR Algarve and Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (for more information please visit the website: creatour.pt).

a. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were specified for this review:

(1) Articles published between January 2000 and February 2021;

(2) Focused explicitly on CT (explicit mention of CT or creative tourist/s in the article);

(3) Reporting empirical research;

(4) Published in peer-reviewed journals;

(5) Written in English, Portuguese and Spanish languages.

We only included articles published from 2000 onwards, because the concept of CT was coined precisely in this year by Richards and Raymond (2000). The aim of this systematic review explains the second and third criteria, while the concern to review only empirical studies with a minimum level of quality justifies the fourth criterion. Finally, the last criterion is justified by the fact that the reviewers are only able to read these languages.

b. Information Sources and Search Strategy

The following electronic databases were searched: EBSCO, Web of Science, and Science Direct. These are the relevant databases that the authors had access to. We decided to combine the Web of Science with EBSCO and Science Direct, as these last two electronic databases also contain articles and, in this way, we ensured a more comprehensive search. The keywords used in the Web of Science database were ("creative tourism") OR ("creative tourist*"), while in the Science Direct database we used the keywords "creative tourism" OR "creative tourist" OR "creative tourists". Finally, in the EBSCO database we used "AB creative tourism OR "AB creative tourist" as keywords.

Searches were carried out on the 3rd of February 2021. In all electronic databases, we limited the search to 2000-2021 and the results were refined by "articles" in the field "document types". In addition to searches in the mentioned electronic databases, we searched the second edition of the ATLAS cultural tourism bibliography (`https://www.academia.edu/48864997/ATLAS_Cultural_Tourism_Bibliography`), which was published by Greg Richards in an academic platform on May, 2021.

c. Selection process

Searches in electronic databases identified 273 records, which were downloaded to the EndNote20 (`http://endnote.com`), a reference management software for screening processes. After removing the duplicates by using this software, 247 records entered the selection process (Figure 1).

The selection process started by screening the titles and abstracts of the identified publications to decide on which articles should be examined in full-text format. Articles that focused on creativity but not related to tourism (e.g. creative industries) were excluded. Hence, we excluded 59 articles by reading titles and 47 records by reading abstracts. As a result, we are left with 141 articles sought for retrieval. Of these, we were not able to access 4 articles, meaning that 137 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. In the next step, the full-text papers were excluded for several reasons (Figure 1). The main criterion for excluding articles was "not focusing on creative tourism". At the end, 50 articles were included for review.

In addition to these 50 articles, we added 10 more from the ATLAS bibliography. This list had, at the time we consulted it, 310 publications. After comparing this list with the initial records that we had identified through electronic databases we found 75 duplications that were removed. Of the 235 articles, we removed the records that could

not be found as full text (6), and as a result we were able to retrieve a total of 229 records. After that, we excluded publications according to the inclusion criteria (Figure 1). The main reason for excluding publications was not being in a journal article format (conference proceedings, books, reports, etc.). Some publications (22 publications) were excluded because they were not written in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. Most of these were written in Chinese and Farsi, languages the authors

of this article are not able to read (the same happened with the three publications that were excluded due to the language criterion in the first phase of the selection process; see Figure 1). In the end, we were left with 10 articles that we added to the 50 previously selected from the electronic databases, thus making 60 articles that were included in the review. All the screening process was carried out by two reviewers working independently and any disagreements were resolved by consensus.
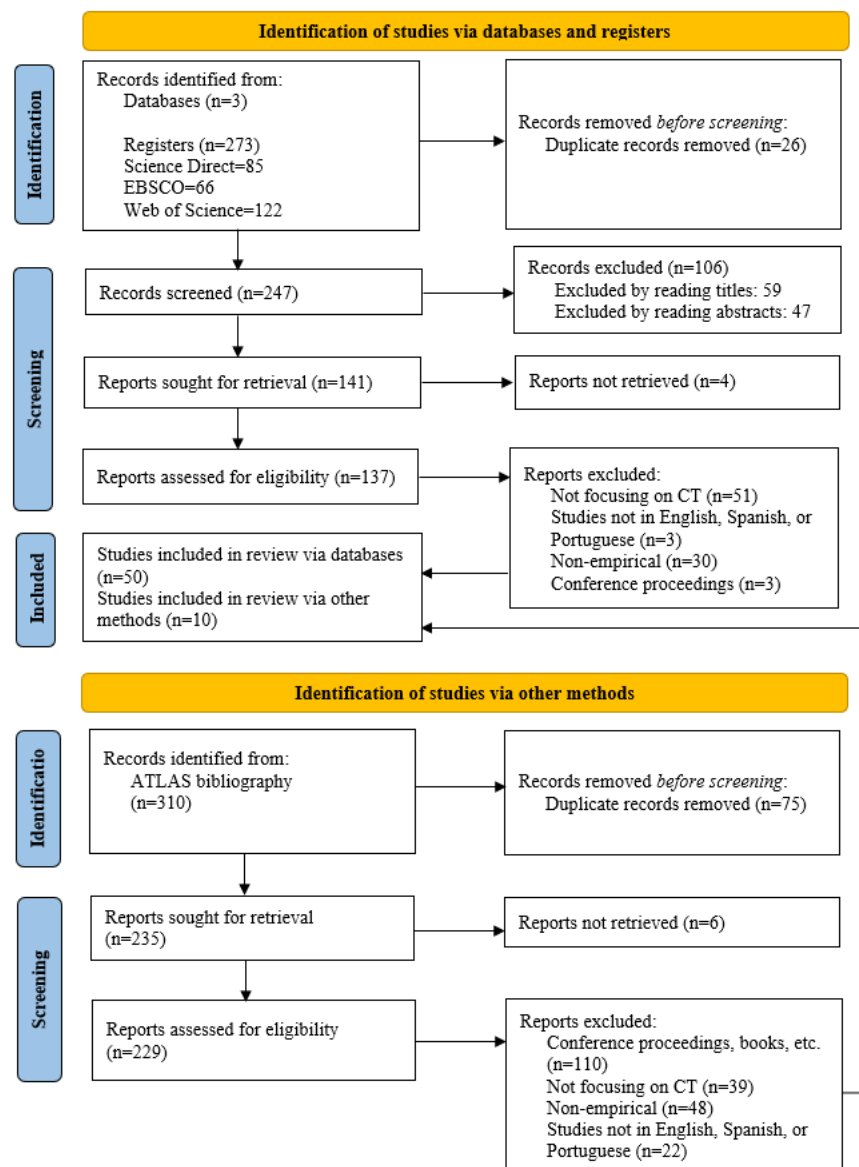

Figure 1 | Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram of literature search on CT

d. Data Collection Process

Data from the included articles were collected to a data collection form (an excel spreadsheet) that includes the following items: (1) author and date; (2) research questions/aims; (3) research methods; (4) research settings; (5) research participants, (6) main conclusions; and (7) reported limitations (Supplementary material 1). The first author collected data from all the included articles. Then, the second and third authors repeated the process independently in 30% of the articles. All adjustments were made in a consensual manner.

e. Synthesis Methods

Two methods were used to synthesize the collected data: narrative synthesis (Popay et al., 2006) and thematic analyses (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Narrative synthesis was used to 'tell the story of the findings of the included studies (Popay et al., 2006, p. 5)'. Tabulation was used as an auxiliary method to organise and display results of individual articles and synthesis. The answers to all research questions, except for the last two (What are the main conclusions? What are the main reported limitations of the studies?), were supported using narrative synthesis. The answers to the last two research questions were sought by thematic analysis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). We reduced the collected data by categorizing: "free codes" are transformed in "descriptive themes" and these themes in the "analytical themes", the most abstract ones (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

f. Study Quality Assessment

The quality of the quantitative articles was assessed by using an adapted version of the Risk of Bias Tool for Prevalence Studies (Hoya et al., 2012). With respect to qualitative articles, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence Quality Appraisal Checklist (NICE, 2012) was used. The quality of the included articles that used mixed methods was assessed by using both tools. All articles were assessed by two reviewers: the first author assessed all articles, while the second author assessed half of these articles and the other half was assessed by the third author. Disagreements were resolved by consensus (See supplementary material 2).

In general, the articles reporting quantitative studies meet all criteria of the quality assessment, exception made to the items on ethical issues (70% of the articles are not clear enough) and representativeness of the sample (26% of the articles do not provide sufficient information). In its turn, the main weaknesses found in the articles reporting qualitative studies have to do with ethical issues (68% do not sufficiently discuss) and richness of the collected data (36% of the articles do not provide sufficient evidence). In addition, about a quarter of the qualitative articles do not provide sufficient information about data collection and analysis.

Among all the articles reviewed, the ones that show the greatest weaknesses are those that report mixed-methods studies. The most significant weaknesses derive from insufficient information on the following items: ethical issues (83% of the articles), reliability of the analysis in the qualitative component of the study (58% of the articles), data richness in the qualitative component of the study (half of the articles), representativeness of the sample in the quantitative component of the study (half of the articles), and level of rigor of the analysis in the quantitative and qualitative components of the study (half of the articles). Moreover, in about a third of the articles, the level of reliability and validity of the study instruments, on the one hand, and the level of consistency in the application of data collection instruments (in the quantitative component of the study), on the other hand, are also not sufficiently discussed.

4. Results

a. Brief overview of the included articles

Although the concept of CT was proposed for the first time in 2000, the publication of empirical research started about a decade later, with most articles published in the last 6 years. The reviewed articles were published in a great diversity of journals with only one where more than 5 of these articles were published (Current Issues in Tourism). In the second position appear 3 journals where 3 of these articles were published (Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change, and Sustainability). The empirical research on CT was carried out mainly in Asia (48%), especially in Eastern Asia, and Europe (33%), mostly in Southwestern Europe.

b. Review Findings

i. Lines of research developed in the empirical literature on creative tourism

Through the analysis of the research objectives of the reviewed articles, we identified 5 lines and 14 sub-lines of research (See supplementary material 3). The lines of research are: (1) characterization of CT stakeholders (9 articles); (2) management of CT projects (28 articles); (3) CT experiences (6 articles); (4) loyalty and revisit intentions; and (5) the role of CT in local/community development (8 articles).

The first line of research (Characterization of CT stakeholders) is focused on the characterization of the CT projects or its developers (Blapp & Mitas, 2018; Remoaldo, Matos, Freitas, et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020), and the creative tourists (the most voluminous subline) (Fernandes & Rachão, 2014; Garces et al., 2020; Remoaldo, Ghanian, et al., 2020; Remoaldo, Serra, et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2016). The second

line of research (Management of CT projects) is concerned with several aspects related to the management of CT projects, ranging from strategic planning (Bakas, Duxbury, Remoaldo, et al., 2019; Kangkhao, 2020; Lee & Lee, 2015) and control (Cruz et al., 2019; Remoaldo, Matos, Gôja, et al., 2020) to assessment and improvement (Ferreira et al., 2019; Limsopitpun, 2016; Melo et al., 2019), also including the issue of project's sustainability (Bastenegar, 2020; Sirikudta et al., 2019; Suphachaimongkol et al., 2019; Thongsamak & Jitpakdee, 2019). Design/development of CT projects is the most productive subline of research (Bakas, Duxbury, & de Castro, 2019; Booyens & Rogerson, 2015; Booyens & Rogerson, 2019; Cabeça et al., 2019; Dias-Sardinha et al., 2018; Elkasrawy, 2020; Fagundes & Ashton, 2016; Guerreiro et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2016; Li & Liu, 2020; Sarantou et al., 2021; Somnuxpong, 2020; Svidruk et al., 2020; Valek, 2020; Wattanacharoensil & Sakdiyakorn, 2016; Whiting & Hannam, 2014).

The focus of the third line of research (CT experiences) is on the tourists' experiences, including its multiple facets (subline that includes most of the articles) (Chan et al., 2020; Chang & Hung, 2021; Chen & Chou, 2019; Tan et al., 2013), and on the perception of authenticity (Wang et al., 2020; Zhang & Xie, 2019). In its turn, the fourth line of research (Loyalty and revisit intentions) is focused on tourists' loyalty (Choi et al., 2020; Suhartanto et al., 2020; Suhartanto et al., 2018) and revisit intentions (Ali et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2014; Dean & Suhartanto, 2019; Huang et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2020; Hung et al., 2016), being the subline on revisit intentions more productive than the subline on loyalty. The last line of research (the role of CT in local/community development) explores the role of CT in local development, more specifically in the development of poor communities (Dias et al., 2020), rural and small cities (the most voluminous subline) (Duxbury et al., 2021; Einali et al., 2019; Gato et al., 2020; Keller & Velibeyoğlu, 2021; Liu et al., 2020),

and urban territories (Cavalcante & Fonseca, 2021; Pawlusinski & Kubal, 2018).

Although the empirical research on CT is relatively recent (it is only about a decade old), it already exhibits considerable diversity. However, there is a clear predominance of the research line on management of CT projects (28 articles), which has about three times more articles than the other research lines. This line of research is the one with the greatest internal diversity as it is subdivided into 5 sublines. Taking the year 2021 as a reference, the oldest lines of research are the first and fourth ones (publications carried out on average 3 years ago), while the most recent line of research is the last one (publications carried out on average 1 year ago). Certain lines of research have been consolidated above all in certain continents. For example, while Asian countries were concentrating on creative tourists' experiences and tourist loyalty and revisit intentions, European countries were more focused on the management and development issues. For example, we see that Portugal is one of the main countries where CT is conceptualized in relation to rural development (e.g. Dias et al., 2020; Gato et al., 2020).

ii. The theoretical/conceptual underpinnings of each line of research

Due to the great diversity of theories and concepts used by the reviewed articles, we opted for presenting only the theories and concepts used by two or more articles (see supplementary material 4, 5). In the first line of research (Characterization of CT stakeholders) the concepts of CT developed by Richards and Raymond (2000) and the UNESCO (2006) were highly cited (6 and 5 articles, respectively). Tan and collaborators, in their two articles (2014, 2016), used their own model of creative experiences (Tan et al., 2013) to characterize the creative tourists. Most articles in the second line of research (Management of CT projects) also mobilized the definition of CT provided by Richards and

Raymond (2000) (10 articles), followed by the definitions of the same concept proposed by Richards (2011) and UNESCO (2006) (5 and 3 articles, respectively). The concept of sustainability (Chirilă et al., 2018; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Korez-Vide, 2013; Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010; Thongsamak et al., 2013; Throsby, 2008; Todorov & Marinova, 2011; UNWTO, 2005; Wurzburger et al., 2009) was used in 6 articles. The concept of CT by Richards and Raymond (2000) was also the most used concept in the third line of research (CT experiences), followed by the concept of perceived authenticity (Wang, 1999; Zatori et al., 2018) and the model of four realms of experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Pine et al., 1999), both mobilized in 2 articles. In the fourth research line (Loyalty and visitor revisit intentions) the most used concept was also the CT concept proposed by Richards and Raymond (2000) (3 articles), and in the second position appears the theory of tourists' Push and Pull motivations (Nowacki, 2009; Prebesen et al., 2013) and the concept of creative attraction (Ali et al., 2016; Richards, 2011), which were used in two articles. In the last research line (The role of CT on local/community development), the CT concept by Richards and Raymond (2000) was the most used concept.

Therefore, we verify that the most used concept in all lines of research is the concept of CT, especially the one proposed by Richards and Raymond (2000). The second most used concept is the one of sustainability (Chirilă et al., 2018; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Korez-Vide, 2013; Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010; Thongsamak et al., 2013; Throsby, 2008; Todorov & Marinova, 2011; UNWTO, 2005; Wurzburger et al., 2009) followed by the concepts of perceived authenticity and creative attraction. With respect to theories and conceptual models, the model of creative experience (Tan et al., 2013), the model of the four realms of experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Pine et al., 1999), and the theory of tourists' push and pull motivations (Nowacki, 2009; Prebesen et

al., 2013) are the most used across the lines of research.

iii. The research settings and research participants of each line of research

To characterize the research settings, we opted to organize them in two sets of categories. In the first set we organised them as follows: (1) rural (data collected in villages and remote locations); (2) urban (data collected in towns and cities); and (3) multiple settings (data collected from various settings, including social media). In the second set of categories, we organized the settings as: (1) regional (data collected from settings located in a territorial unit corresponding to a region); (3) national (data collected from settings located at various points in a country); and (5) international (data collected from settings located in two or more countries) (see supplementary material 4 and 6). In the first line of research (Characterization of CT stakeholders), the settings tend to be distributed in a balanced way between rural and urban, on the one hand, and between local and national, in the other hand. However, in the remaining lines of research there are clear concentrations of settings in one of the categories mentioned above. In the second line of research (Management of CT projects), most of the settings are urban, on the one hand, and local, on the other hand. The concentration of settings is even higher in the third line of research (CT experiences), as all of them are urban and, apart from one, local. In the fourth line of research (Loyalty and visitor revisit intentions), most of the settings are also urban, but they are evenly distributed by the local/regional categories. In the last line of research (The role of CT in local/community development), most of the settings are rural and local. It is worth mentioning that in the first two lines of research we find online settings at a national and international level. In a minority of cases, the provided information about research settings was not clear.

If we look across the lines of research, we see that there is a predominance of urban settings, on the one hand, and local settings, on the other hand. The near absence of international settings stands out.

To deal with the diversity of research participants, we created the following categories: (1) tourists (national and domestic) and visitors/event participators; (2) residents; (3) artisans/artists (including designers, craftsman etc.); (4) local/regional authorities and policymakers (including tourism industry experts, community leaders etc.); (5) representatives of organisations/communities (including creative communities, associations, pioneers of CT etc.); (6) managers in tourism sector; (7) business owners and entrepreneurs in tourism/CT sectors; (8) tour operators and other tourism professionals (including employees in CT/tourism, CT mediators, etc.); and (9) researchers in the tourism field (See supplementary material 4 and 7).

Tourists and visitors/event participators are the main research participants in three lines of research - loyalty and visitor revisit intentions (9 articles), characterization of CT stakeholders (7 articles) and CT experiences (6 articles) - clearly standing out from the others. In the other lines of research there is a greater balance between the research participants. In the second line of research (Management of CT projects) most of the articles collected data from local/regional authorities and policymakers (11 articles) and business owners and entrepreneurs (11 articles), but a significant number of articles collected data from other research participants: tourists and visitors/event participators (8 articles), managers in tourism sector (7 articles), and artisans/artists (5 articles). This diversity is also found in the last line of research (The role of CT in local/community development): business owners and entrepreneurs (4 articles), representatives of organizations/associations or communities (2 articles), local/regional authorities and policy makers (2 articles) and residents

(2 articles). Overall, it is interesting to note that residents and artisans/artists participated in a very small number of articles.

iv. The research methods used in each line of research

The first line of research (Characterization of CT stakeholders) has an equal number of quantitative and qualitative articles, and the dominant methods of collecting data were surveys and interviews (See supplementary material 4 and 8). The second line of research (Management of CT projects) is predominantly qualitative, although there is also a significant number of mixed methods studies. With respect to methods of collecting data, interviews stand out as the dominant method, but surveys appear in second place, as they were widely used by mixed methods studies. The third line of research (CT experiences) is dominated by quantitative research designs and by surveys, happening the same with the fourth line of research (Loyalty and visitor revisit intentions). On the contrary, in the last line of research (The role of CT in local/community development), qualitative research design and interviews predominate.

Overall, there is a balance between quantitative and qualitative research designs, although there is a non-negligible number of articles that adopted a mixed research design. When it comes to data collection methods, surveys and interviews clearly stand out, although a considerable number of articles have used ethnography, focus groups and non-participant observations.

v. The main themes addressed in the conclusions of each line of research

With respect to the themes addressed in the conclusions of the reviewed articles, we identified the main themes (analytical themes), sub-themes (descriptive themes) and free codes, although to answer this review question we consider that it is enough to focus on the themes and sub-themes (See supplementary material 9 and 10).

The main theme in the conclusions of the first line of research (Characterization of CT stakeholders) is "profiling creative tourists" (12 articles), which includes the classification of the creative tourists and their preferences, expectations, and behaviors, the examination of their motivations and satisfaction, as well as their levels of well-being. The other themes are: strategies for the improvement of CT initiatives, characterizing CT initiatives in specific contexts, and developing new concepts to study CT in specific contexts. In the second line of research (Management of CT projects) two main themes emerge from the conclusions: factors that may enhance CT development (18 articles), and strategies for better management of (and better policies for) CT activities (17 articles). The first theme focuses on the role of different factors for CT development, such as the role of certain methods/activities/attractions, as well as resources, in CT development. The second theme includes mainly managerial suggestions to governmental bodies and managers. The other themes are the role of stakeholders on CT development, profiling tourists for managerial purposes, measuring CT activities, challenges for CT development, and benefits of CT for locals/local destinations.

In its turn, "characterizing the CT experience" is the main theme found in the conclusions of the third line of research (CT experiences), which refers to the features of tourism experiences, its components, and linkages with other aspects. The other themes are authenticity, strategies for enhancing CT experiences, and perceptions of CT experiences. The conclusions in the fourth line of research (Loyalty and visitor revisit intentions) are centred around two main themes: strategies for enhancing revisit intentions and loyalty, and revisit/behavioural intentions. While the first theme refers to managerial suggestions for enhancing revisit intentions and loyalty, the second theme fo-

cuses on revisit/behavioral intentions and linkages with other factors. Tourists' loyalty and the determinants of CT experiences in the context of revisit intentions are the remaining themes. Finally, in the last line of research (The role of CT in local/community development), there is one theme that stands out slightly, namely the benefits/role of CT in rural/urban local development, accounting for the benefits of CT for local communities/rural development, and the role/effects of CT on urban/small towns development. The other two topics discussed in the conclusions are the potential of small/rural spaces for the CT development (including the advantages of small cities/villages for CT and rural revitalization), and the strategies for CT development in poor communities/rural areas (including suggestions for CT development in poor communities and suggestions for CT development in rural areas). The last theme discussed in the conclusions of this line of research is the barriers in developing CT in poor communities/rural areas.

If we look across the lines of research, two patterns emerge. First, there is a predominance of themes that refer to conclusions of a descriptive nature (definitions, classifications, evaluations, identifications, etc.). Exceptions to this pattern are found in the third and fourth lines of research (CT experiences and loyalty and visitor revisit intentions, respectively), where a significant part of the conclusions are of a more complex nature, accounting, for example, for links/associations between factors/variables. Second, themes reflecting management-related issues are found in all lines of research, with exception of the third one (CT experiences) in which these issues are not so explicitly addressed.

vi. The main reported limitations of the studies in each line of research

The main limitations of the reviewed articles reported by the respective authors were grouped in the following categories (See supplementary material 11): sample restrictions (small number of participants, non-diversified samples), data restrictions (data trustworthiness, limited number of indicators, limited set of variables), context-specific results (limited generalization of the results to other cultural contexts), methodological constraints (constrains in the data collection and analysis), scarce resources (time, budget, etc.), and not discussed (for detailed information please see supplementary material 4 and 11).

In the first line of research (Characterization of CT stakeholders) the main reported limitations are context-specific results and methodological constraints. In the second line of research (Management of CT projects) the main limitation has to do with methodological constraints. However, the vast majority of the articles in this line do not report limitations. In its turn, data restrictions and context-specific results are the main reported limitations in the third line of research (CT experiences). In the fourth line of research (Loyalty and visitor revisit intentions) the main reported limitations are context-specific results and sample restrictions. In the last line of research (The role of CT in local/community development), scarce resources and methodological constraints are the main reported limitations, although most of the articles do not identify any limitation.

Overall, context-specific results and methodological constraints are the main reported limitations. This means that most of the authors of the reviewed articles recognize that they have problems in terms of generalizability and validity of the results.

5. Discussion and recommendations for future research

Although conceptual work on CT started at the beginning of this century, empirical research initiated about a decade later. This research is mainly

concentrated in Asia and Europe. Despite being relatively recent, empirical research on CT has already reached a considerable volume and diversity. The lines of research identified in this systematic review are like those identified by Duxbury and Richards (2019), which shows considerable consistency in this regard. Nevertheless, our review provides a detailed picture of the empirical research, as it also identifies the sublines of research. It also allows us to see which lines and sublines of research have more articles. In this regard, the clear predominance of the line on the management of CT projects stands out. From our viewpoint, this probably has to do with the fact that CT is an expanding industry, raising interest among several agents, territories, and cities (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Richards, 2014; Florida, 2014), but with important challenges in terms of economic and financial sustainability. Anyway, aspects related to the management and development of CT projects are not limited to this line of research, as they also appear in the other lines, except for the line on CT experiences. This shows that empirical research on CT is strongly influenced by management and policy concerns. While not underestimating the importance of management issues, future research may pay more attention to aspects that go beyond management, either by deepening the other lines of research identified by us, or by exploring new topics, such as the role of new forms of creative and niche tourism in the promotion of social inclusion (Couret, 2020; Duarte et al., 2022), CT and its relation with well-being and positive emotions, a deeper examination of the benefits of CT on local development (Pimenta et al., 2021), new forms of active tourist participation (De Bruin & Jelinčić, 2016), emotional engagement of tourists with the communities, and CT as a promoter of "regenerative tourism" (Duxbury et al., 2020).

The analysis of each line of research revealed that the articles on CT used a significant diversity of theories and conceptual models, what is in line with the plurality of research aims. However,

it is worth noting the great centrality of the concept of CT developed by Richards and Raymond (2000) across all lines of research. This means that the bulk of empirical research has remained faithful to the initial definition of the concept of CT, not having made use of the changes that have been introduced in this concept over time (which are described in the second section of this article). Future empirical research should not be indifferent to these conceptual developments and should seek to assess the need to introduce new conceptual elements.

Research settings are not the same across all lines of research, although there is a clear trend towards urban settings, on the one hand, and local settings, on the other hand. The line of research on the role of the CT in the development of communities diverges from this pattern, as it privileges rural settings. The centrality on urban settings has to do with the fact that CT initially developed in urban areas and only later expanded to rural areas (Richards, 2019). It is also worth noting that international settings are nearly absent. In our view, articles comparing CT in rural and urban settings, as well as in different countries could enhance this field of research.

With respect to research participants, it is not surprising that tourists and visitors stand out in certain lines of research, and local/regional authorities and business owners, and entrepreneurs stand out on other lines. What is surprising is the small number of articles that had artisans/artists and residents as participants, as these are an integral part of the CT process (Richards and Wilson, 2006). From our viewpoint, it would be important that the perspectives of artisans/artists, creativity pioneers and residents begin to be further explored by future studies, because only in this way we can have a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

This systematic review also reveals that certain lines of research, apart from one, have privileged quantitative designs and others qualitative designs.

However, it is a bit surprising that the research lines on CT experiences and loyalty and visitor revisit intentions, which include aspects that may require an interpretive understanding, are dominated by quantitative design. Considering the nature of these lines of research, an increase in qualitative studies could enrich scientific knowledge of some relevant topics. The themes addressed in the conclusions of the reviewed articles are not entirely surprising, as they reflect the research aims of each line of research. What stands out is, once again, the predominance of issues related to the management and development of CT projects, as these issues are found in the conclusions of all lines of research, except for the line of research on creative experiences. The themes found in the conclusions also reflect the type of analysis carried out, which in three lines of research (Characterization of CT stakeholders, Management of CT projects and the role of CT in local/community development) is mainly descriptive and exploratory. Only in the lines on CT experiences and loyalty and revisit intentions there are themes that denote more complex analyses (e.g. relationships between several variables). We advocate for more complex analysis to account for the complexity of the CT field and the contexts in which it operates.

Finally, regarding limitations reported in the reviewed articles, we found that two lines of research are not as reflexive as we would expect: management of CT projects and the role of CT in local development. Of the articles that identify limitations, the most reported are context-specific results and methodological constraints, referring to issues related with generalizability and validity. More diversified samples, including representative samples, and a closer surveillance over data collection process may help to overcome these limitations.

Still in relation to limitations, the quality assessment carried out by us revealed that the discussion of ethical aspects is neglected by most articles. This is an aspect that should be considered in future studies and publications. The quality assessment also revealed that the articles that report mixed method studies (which predominate in the line of research on the management of CT projects) are the ones that exhibit the most weaknesses, so greater care is needed in the execution and publication of these articles.

6. Conclusions and limitations

In our view, this systematic review is useful for researchers in the CT field, as to the best of our knowledge, this review is the first one to provide a detailed overview of the empirical research on CT. We can conclude that empirical research on CT is clearly expanding, having already acquired a reasonable level of diversification and maturity. To reach higher levels of maturity, we believe that it is above all necessary to look beyond the issues related to project management and development policies (extending, for example, the lines of research on creative experiences and the role of CT on local development), to overcome the existing conceptual fixation, to break with the circumscription to urban and local settings, and to reverse the negligence of the artisans/artists and residents' perspectives. It is also of paramount importance to consider the ethical issues. We are not claiming that the research carried out so far is dubious regarding these issues, but that it is necessary to discuss them explicitly when publishing the results. It would also be important to overcome the limitations arising from the context-specific results and certain methodological constraints and to invest progressively on more complex and in-depth analyses, as well as in open discussions of the limitations of the studies.

This review also has some practical contributions for policymakers and practitioners in the CT field. For the policymakers, considering the main conclusions of the managerial and development

studies in CT, we found out the importance of adding CT to tourism policies to foster the sustainable development of rural places, poor communities and small cities or towns. Also, the reviewed articles highlighted the importance of applying CT with strategic planning by including all CT stakeholders, especially governmental authorities, entrepreneurs, and local artisans in the development process. When it comes to the contributions for practitioners, this review showed the importance of quality of CT experiences and products, and immersive local experiences for tourists. This review also summed up how to ensure tourist loyalty and satisfaction, and how to increase the success of tourism projects, improve the CT product, or how to assess and manage them. Thus, we believe that this research can be a guideline for policymakers and tourism professionals since it maps out the general characteristics of the empirical research on managerial studies in CT.

Despite our efforts to include the largest number of articles, it is possible that this systematic review is not fully comprehensive, because we have left out publications in other formats, such as book chapters and conference proceedings, and in other languages other than English, Portuguese and Spanish. In addition, the review of study findings/results could have gone deeper, but due to the volume of articles reviewed and the diversity of review questions, this did not appear to be viable in a single article.

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Supplementary material

All supplementary material can be found at `https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371167697_Supplementary_material_of_the_Empirical_Research_on_Creative_Tourism_-_A_Systematic_Review_published_in_the_Journal_of_Tourism_Development_41_2023#fullTextFileContent`

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