

TOURIST EXPERIENCES AND/OR EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM? STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE BY THE TRAVELER

Sónia Branquinho de Almeida

PhD student in Tourism, Heritage and Territory, by the ``University of Coimbra`` and Researcher at CEGOT -Center for Studies and Territorial Planning (Group 3 -Tourism, Heritage and Territory) -PORTUGAL, Post-Diploma in Tourism, Leisure and Culture, Postgraduate in Management and Development in Tourism and Degree in Tourism
Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal

Norberto Santos

Doctor with Aggregation, Full Professor at the Faculty of Languages of the ``University of Coimbra``, Coordinator of Group 3 -Tourism, Heritage and Territory of CEGOT -Center for Studies and Land Planning:- PORTUGAL
Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal

Mónica Méndez Díaz

PhD in Tourism and Professor at the Faculty of Tourism Sciences at the University: Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid,ESPANHA
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Espanha

All content in this magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License. Attribution-Non-Commercial-Non-Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).



Isabel Dias Santiago

University of Texas at Austin, Estados Unidos
da América

Degree in Accounting and Auditing,
Postgraduate in Law of Local Authorities
and Master in Data Science and Business
Analytics by University of Texas –United
States

Abstract: Academic work that aims to discuss the theme that involves the dubious question of the defining border of what is meant by Experience Tourism or Experiential Tourism, explaining about the motivations and profiles of its performers. We want answers to the controversial questions: Is all tourism always synonymous with experiences? Can active, creative tourism whose main objective is to provide sensations and experimentation benefit from the designation of Experiential Tourism? Regarding methodological procedures, a qualitative and exploratory research was carried out, as well as an analysis of the results of an online survey submitted to a sample of 295 respondents, from 25 countries on all continents, to people over 18 years old, who carried out at least at least one tourist trip in the last 5 years, between 2018 and 2022.

Keywords: Experiential Tourism; Creative Tourism; Challenge Tourism; Active Tourism; Tourist Experiences

INTRODUCTION

Will the Tourism sector, as a factor of experiences and participation in destinations different from those in which we usually live, foster the emergence of a new concept based on experiential activities? Will there be room for in-depth analysis and for the creation of structured tourism products whose main focus is really the active experience based on sensations, emotions, activities and challenges? It is precisely this issue that we intend to address in this article.

Is tourism experience or experiential?

From deciding on the destination, through choosing the form of booking, whether more autonomous via multiservice platforms or directly contacting agents at the locations or by choosing travel agencies, to arriving and enjoying the places to visit, there is already an amalgamation of experiences that

undoubtedly contribute to the value to be attributed to tourist travel. We believe that, by itself, this whole process is already a tourist experience. In this light, MARUJO (2016, p. 1) states that: *“Everything that a tourist observes or experiences in a destination is an experience, whether negative or positive.”*

Faced with this question, it is important to finally refer to the etymological meaning of the word experience, thus, and according to MACHADO (1987, Vol.2) it derives from Latin. For the aforementioned and renowned Portuguese linguist “... experimenting comes from ‘experimentare’, ‘rehearsing, experimenting’ and experience derives from ‘experientia’, ‘rehearsal, proof, attempt; experience; acquired, practical experience». Turner (1987, p. 456-457) considers that the same word, experience, “is an English word with a derivation from the Indo-European base *per-, “to try, to venture out, to risk” – being able to see how its double “drama”, from the Greek dran, “to do”, culturally mirrors the “danger” etymologically implied in the word “experience”.

It is, therefore, common to associate the word with the meaning of time to accomplish something, which leads to the expression of “having experience”. In our understanding and for the defense of the theory that we present here, experience in tourism or experiential tourism will be related to the actions of feeling, doing and experiencing. Considering that this word may have numerous interpretations and even be considered quite abstract, we corroborate the opinion of Dieguez T., Conceição O. (2021), who states that “The word “experience” seems to be very abstract and difficult to conceptualize due to its complexity and dynamic nature”.

According to the authors CUTLER and CARMICHAEL (2010 p.5-6), *“...through studies developed on the tourism experience (results and influences), they also developed*

a conceptual model of the tourist experience, where they represent that the tourist experience is everything that happens during the occurrence of tourism (travel to the place, the activities in the place and the return).” For the definition of the tourist experience, there are several interpretations of its meaning, as stated by CHETRI et al (2004, p.1), saying that *“There is no single theory that defines the meaning and extent of the tourist experience.”* In turn, MARUJO (2016, p.3), refers that the literature describes a very rich field of research on the nature of the tourist experience, and reinforces his theory by stating that *“some authors recognize the existence of conceptual and methodological difficulties in evaluating the tourist experience”* (MENDES and GUERREIRO, 2011, p. 318).

The authors Agarwal, S., & Singh, P. (2022) state that *“...tourism is seen as a driver of curiosity to see how others live their lives”*. They also consider that tourists *“want to get out of the “tourist bubble” and experience the real side of the destination”*. But what is meant by the real side of destiny, will it imply experimentation and the experience of sensations? Could there be a concept called Experiential Tourism that has as its motivational basis the participation in activities that are organized around the action of experiencing, of seeing what it is like, of feeling physically and emotionally? Will there be room for the creation of tourist products and structured destinations based on this logic of doing, feeling and experiencing, improving knowledge and associating adrenaline? We believe so.

EXPERIENCE TOURISM

MONDO et al (2017, p.27), refers that *“...in today’s service economy, many companies simply build experiences around their traditional offerings to better sell them. To realize the benefits of staging experiences, however, companies must deliberately design engaging experiences and charge for them.* Addressing the importance of authenticity as a motivational factor for the cultural and experiential tourist, it is important here to address the binomial Authenticity and Staged Authenticity. According to GUERREIRO and MARQUES (2017, p. 8) the issue of authenticity is one of the most discussed topics in the Sociology of Tourism in the last four decades, although its original definition has been changed, the term has been accompanying the evolution of studies in tourism area. In turn, HEITMANN (2011, p.45) identifies the origin of the term, etymologically, in the Greco-Roman period, *“where it meant: “the sense of truth, sincerity or originality in a given historical context. In its (most) simple form, it refers to the “true thing”, genuine and unadulterated.”*

At the end of the nineties of the last century, MaCANNELL advances with the theory that tourists are fundamentally motivated by the search for authentic experiences, far from the alienation of the day-to-day of the capitalist society, which was lived at the time, and which is still reflected today. The author refers, then, in his work of 1999, p.159 that *“... it is believed that authentic experiences only present themselves to those who break the chains of everyday existence and begin to «live»* “After these considerations, the question remains: what kind of authenticity? Based on the opinion of MARUJO (2018), we corroborate with it when it explains the fact that, the authenticity and experience of each one in certain events is relative to each type of tourist, who can have their own perception what for him is authenticity and experiential

quality”. We consider that, in fact, quality VS authenticity for some will not be the same as for others and that tourist satisfaction is intrinsically linked to their experiences, personal tastes and even related to their biographical condition.

Given that Experiential Tourism is not the same as the trade in traditional services, PINE II; GILMORE (1999, p.61) state that: *“this transition from selling services to selling experiences will have the same difficulties as the shift from the industrial economy to the service economy.”* Faced with this statement, we reinforce our position that, in fact, the complexity of the services inherent in the enjoyment of leisure time by individuals is necessarily different from a so-called traditional service that is based on the first dimension of quality, the obligatory one, the one that is implicit and concerns attributes that the customer expects to find and that contribute to the formation of his expectations and if, eventually, he does not find them, he feels dissatisfied. As for services related to leisure, tourism and well-being, the associated dimension of quality is the attraction that translates into attributes that go beyond expectations, surprising the tourist, leaving him with a positive opinion. These attributes referenced here are directly related to the possibility of experimentation. In this path, and revering that travel experiences are, nowadays, considered the added value of the tourist, CHANDRALAL, Lalith; VALENZUELA, Roberto-Fredy (2013, p. 178) make known that: *“This refers to participants “ memories of real local experiences during the trip i.e. experiencing actual local life, cultures and foods of toured destinations.* PINE and GILMORE (1999, p.161) point out that there is a post-internship after the lived experience. In other words, they believe that the focus must be on personalizing experiences, and that the service offered must be almost individualized

and unique.

After analyzing the theories of the aforementioned authors, adding MODY's (2016) regarding the main characteristics of the Experience Tourism Market, we present an update to the representative table. To the two existing versions, we have added four new features that we consider essential in terms of experiential tourism. Thus, in terms of passive tourists, we suggest that destinations increasingly invest in a structured offer based on authenticity and sustainability at a cross-sectional level. With regard to the active tourist, we propose the addition of reinforcing the destination's offer and uniqueness, as well as planning entertainment that instills adrenaline and satisfaction in the tourist's experiences.

Citing again authors Pine and Gilmore, PINE II; GILMORE (1999, p.69), who present the existence of the Four Realms of an Experience, claiming that the experience must be studied and worked taking into consideration, several dimensions. Two decades later and with the behavior of tourists changing, we propose a new version for the Experiential Realms, as shown below, the adaptation of the graph conceived by the aforementioned authors (1999), with the edition of MODY (2016).

According to MONDO and GÂNDARA (2017, p.26), *"the theme of management has stood out in the field of study of experiential tourism, promoting new scientific demands for the area, mainly on the management of emotions, quality of experience and new forms and marketing tools.* It is precisely these emotions that may be at the basis of the creation of this Typology of Experiential Tourism, a reflection of which are the combination of various sub-typologies based on the basis of cultural and sports tourism.

CREATIVE, ACTIVE AND CHALLENGE TOURISM RELATED TO THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Returning to the question that relates the sub-typologies arising from Cultural Tourism, the active, the creative and the challenges with Experiential Tourism, we intend to explain about this combination, which may have as main objective to provide sensations and experimentation to visitors.

The concept of Creative Tourism was presented by the authors Crispin Raymond and Greg Richards in the 2000s, however, already in the 90s, of the last century, Richards dedicated himself to the analysis of this theme, stating that: *"The apparent success of Cultural Tourism development strategies has encouraged cities and regions to use the combination of culture and tourism, with the supply of cultural goods growing faster than cultural demand."* (RICHARDS & WILSON, 2007, p.10). This reality, combined with the growing competition between destinations, stimulated the creation of cultural events, which were increasingly different and impressive, but which were not sufficiently marked to create a distinction between destinations. This serial reproduction of culture triggered an increase in demand for new tourism products that would improve the experience of staying at the destination (freely translated from Richards & Wilson, 2007). More recently, RICHARDS (2021, P. 2) states that: *"The creative industries have become an engine for the growing token economy, while supporting national and regional differentiation."* In the same vein, DUXBURY et al (2021, P. 1 and 13) consider that creative tourism is a new field of research, with most of the attention focused on creative tourism activities in large urban centers, on the other hand, also conclude that, in small-scale destinations and in rural areas, *"the concepts of sustainable cultural tourism and regenerative tourism examine the potential*

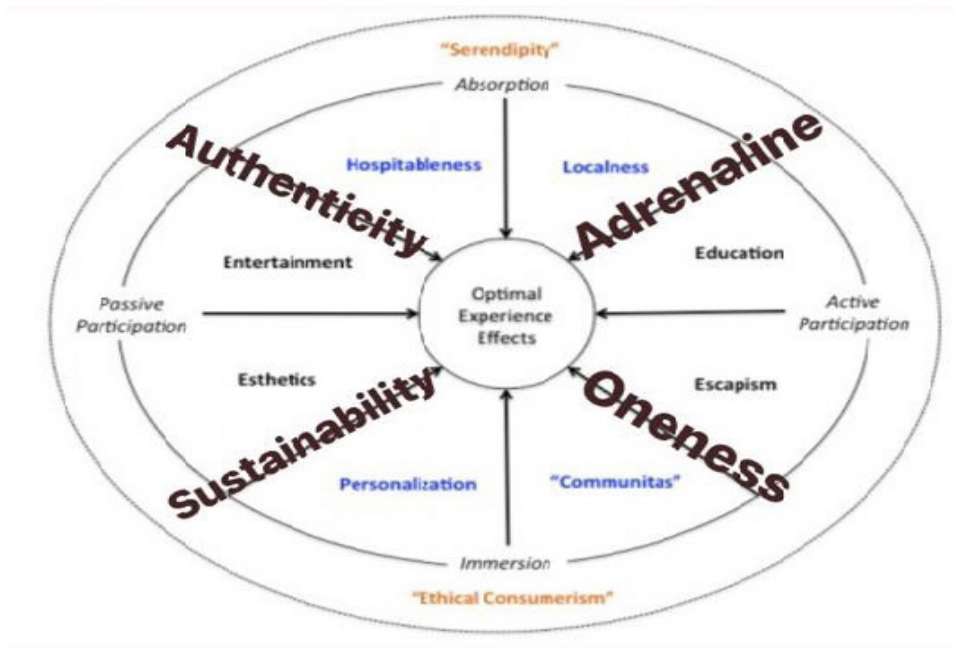


Fig. 2 – Framework Economy of Experiences in Tourism
 Source: adapted from PINE and GILMORE (1999) and MODY (2016)

of creative tourism as a regenerative element in community development processes". Our analysis of the literature, from the oldest to the most recent, whose articles address Creative Tourism, we can state that this has been one of the bets of destinations for expanding the differentiated offer, in order to attract more responsible, interested and participants.

Relating active tourism to creative tourism leads us to demystify the question of the "active" design only with the physical and sporting part, whose participants have to enjoy an optimal condition of robustness. Although there is no agreement on the terminology of active tourism, and in the opinion of SARMIENTO (2006, p. 105-106) the term is variable according to the perspective presented and can be recreational, adventure, sports and leisure.

CHALLENGE TOURISM

Authors De Bruin, A. and Jelinčić, D.A. (2016, p. 4-5), present in a junction of tourism subtypologies a new concept that they call "participatory experience tourism - PET (Participatory Experience Tourism), considering it advanced and preferable to the reframing of "creative tourism" to capturing varied forms of experience involving active tourist participation. us- that this can include adding value to destinations (freely translated). We believe that such adding value to destinations will have to be monitored and sustainable so that the relationship between the local and global dimensions is beneficial. According to FLETCHER et al. (2019) visitors who travel from distant places can look at the local resident as "experiences" and this factor may contribute to the loss of identity of places and dissatisfaction of those involved. In this sense, NASCIMENTO (2022, p.1) argues that "...Experience Tourism is not just a niche market aimed at an audience interested in less standardized trips". In fact,

and with the diversification of demand and the benchmarking actions that local policy makers have imported, in a phenomenon of acculturation, it can distort the essence of the aforementioned PET – Participatory Experience Tourism.

This phenomenon of active participation in tourist experiences has been triggering the appearance of new types of activities linked to the challenge, triggering competitions at the sensory level, where feeling the adrenaline combined with the acquisition of knowledge of cultural, historical, ethnographic aspects of the destinations, become the essential elements of the traveling participant. The escape rooms, created in Budapest in 2012, are one of those examples that, more and more, entice tourists to travel to participate in these challenges. LAMA (2018, p. 1), regarding this statement of ours, states that, "*Live escapism is a leisure trend that has been experiencing an extraordinary growth in recent years*", making it known in his study that the *Escape Rooms or "escape", as he himself calls the modality "live escapism" live is the most valued leisure activity in the main European tourist destinations*".

Another typology fully associated with participatory experience tourism is Dark Tourism which, due to its emotional involvement related to macabre facts that have occurred, leads tourists to actively participate in sensory journeys, often challenging their own fears and weaknesses, as well as how, facing potential even physiological dangers, as is the case of visits to places that still offer some danger to participants, as is the case of a visit to the vicinity of the former Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station, in Ukraine.

Analyzing these emerging tourist modalities, we can therefore state that there is a vast range of activities and types that lead tourists to want to travel, considering their maximum motivation to be that which is related to experience and active and emotional

participation.

METHODOLOGY

Regarding methodological procedures, a qualitative and exploratory research was carried out, as well as an analysis of the results of an online survey submitted to a sample of 295 respondents, from 25 countries on all continents, to people over 18 years old, who carried out at least one tourist trip in the last 5 years (2018 to 2022). We understand it to be a trip when you are traveling from your usual place of residence, work or study and there has been at least one overnight stay. Of the respondents, 75% are residents of Portugal. The study's margin of error is 7.5% in a universe of 5,641 thousand people. This number represents the average number of residents in Portugal who traveled abroad in the last 3 years, between 2018 and 2020. Source: Adapted from BY DATA (2021) – Statistical Table - Resident population who traveled for tourism: total and by travel destination.

DATA VALIDATION

The analyzed data were checked and their collection validated by carrying out a statistical test, in collaboration with the University of Texas at Austin, using the Python Software Foundation. It was possible to verify in the observation of the database, a group of 292 individuals of two genders (not having an individual answered), coming from six continents (considering North America and South America), with three types of Places of Residence, rural area, small urban area and large urban area. Respondents revealed that they had 11 different levels of education.

In analyzing the data, it can also be seen that there are seven types/reasons for travel for the largest annual trip. The graph revealed that the respondents are mostly men, coming from Europe and small urban areas.

The most frequent and largest type of trip

per year is clearly the one for Holidays, Leisure and Recreation.

It can be seen that the database considered a group of 292 individuals aged between 15 and 84 years. These respondents come from households with one, two, three or four elements, with the lowest average income being around €700.00 (seven hundred euros) and the highest of €6,000.00 (six thousand euros), 40 people chose not to answer this question. Finally, it was observed that the respondents' average annual travel frequency is 2.18 times.

ANALYSIS OF EARNED RESULTS

Let us pay attention to the results of the key questions of the applied survey, which allow us to conclude about the pertinence of the emergence of the Concept of Experiential Tourism. The first intends to assess the respondents' opinion about tourism being directly related to experiences.

Q1 - Is all tourism always synonymous with experiences?

- 66% think so;
- 19% think not;
- 15% don't care or whatever

The above results demonstrate, therefore, that two thirds of the respondents consider affirmatively against only a number less than one fifth who consider that there is not, always, a relationship between the practice of tourism and experiences.

With regard to a more detailed analysis of the term Experiential Tourism, where participants are asked about its scientific use, we used the following survey.

Q2 - Can active, creative tourism whose main objective is to provide sensations and experimentation benefit from the designation of Experiential Tourism?

- 54% of respondents refer to this

Categorical features	count	unique	top	freq
Gender	291	2	Female	169
Continent	292	6	Europe	257
Place of Residence	292	3	Small Urban Area	180
Education Level	290	11	Degree	106
Most frequent type of travel per year -Biggest Travel	292	7	Holidays, Leisure and Recreation	209

Fig. 3 – General Table of Characteristics Most Representative of Respondents

Source: authors, 2023

These results were obtained using: Python Software Foundation, <https://www.python.org/>, Python Pandas Library - Pandas is an open source library in Python, 2023

Numerical features	count	mean	std	min	25%	50%	75%	max
Age	292	36.12329	13.69295	15	23	37	45	84
Household	291	2.61512	1.058453	1	2	3	3	4
Average monthly income per household cap	252	2347.222	1377.202	700	1500	2500	3500	6000
Yearly Travel Frequency	292	2.181507	1.092587	1	1	2	3	4

Fig. 3 – General Table of Origin of Respondents

Source: authors, 2023

- 10.6% claim this association as essential
- 27.5% do not consider it.

About 65% of respondents have a positive opinion on this more complex issue, with some even considering the association as fundamental.

Following the previous information, and in order to find out about the notoriety that the term Experiential Tourism already enjoys, the following question confirms that more than half of the respondents already recognize it.

Q3 – Is there already recognition of the Experiential Tourism designation?

- 56.5% of respondents say they have already heard the designation.

43.5% do not recognize the designation

To the question about the possibility of the emergence of this typology, we can analyze that most of the participants in the study consider that yes.

Q4 - Will the Tourism sector, as a factor of experiences in destinations different from those in which we usually live, foster the emergence of a new concept based on experiential activities?

- 63.3% think so;
- 4.4% think not;
- 13.6% don't care or don't care

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Thinking about the research carried out, as well as the analysis of the results obtained from, mostly, respondents belonging to the traveling academic community, we consider, therefore, that we are facing the fruition of a new type of Tourism, Experiential. Still in a phase considered as an embryonic phase of perception – identification and its development, it is important to analyze it as a transformative participatory mode of action for all those who seek experience,

creativity, innovation and proximity to local communities during the tourism process.

It is important to mention and distance this new Tourist Typology from the one identified as a transforming tourist experience, as this presupposes a change in their behaviors and ways of thinking and acting, as defined by the authors: Soulard, McGehee, & Knollenberg et al (2021) *that the term transformative experience (ET) of tourists connotes the moment when tourists experience profound changes during the trip and also afterwards when they return home*". Although they may have some interconnection and considering that any kind of tourist trip always contributes to an individual's learning and emotional enrichment, the Tourism Typology that we present here is based on the active physical, emotional and cognitive participation of tourists in activities provided by the destinations. With regard to this evidence, we argue that, in tourist destinations, entities must be created that, together with regional stakeholders, are dedicated to the planning, development and implementation of projects and actions that are based on the concern to provide the above experiences referenced in a structured and coordinated way.

REFERENCES

- BUTLER, R. W. (2006a.) "The Tourism Area Life Cycle: Vol. 1". Application and modifications. Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- BUTLER, R. W. (2006b). "The Tourism Area Life Cycle: Vol. 2". Conceptual and theoretical issues. Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- DE BRUIN, A. e Jelinčić, D.A. (2016). "Toward extending creative tourism: participatory experience tourism", *Tourism Review*, Vol. 71 No. 1, pp. 57-66.
- DIEGUEZ T., Conceição O. (2021). "Turismo Experiencial e Marketing Experiencial: Uma Abordagem Inovadora". In: Abreu A., Liberato D., González E.A., Garcia Ojeda J.C. (eds) *Avanços em Turismo, Tecnologia e Sistemas. ICOTTS 2020. Inovação Inteligente, Sistemas e Tecnologias*, vol 209. Springer, Cingapura.
- DUXBURY, N.; BAKAS, F.E.; VINAGRE de Castro, T.; SILVA, S.(2021). "Creative Tourism Development Models towards Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism". *Sustainability* 2021, 13.
- JACKSON, M. (1987). *Resenhas de Livros : A ANTROPOLOGIA DA EXPERIÊNCIA*. Editado por Victor W. Turner e Edward M. Bruner com um epílogo por Clifford Geertz. Urbana e Chicago, Universidade de Illinois Press, 1986. *O Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 23(3), 456-457.
- JOELLE SOULARD, Nancy Gard McGEHEE, Marc J. STERN, Kristin M. LAMOUREUX, (2021), "Transformative tourism: Tourists' drawings, symbols, and narratives of change", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Volume 87.
- LAMA, Arsenio Villar Lama (2018). "OCIO Y TURISMO MILLENNIAL: EL FENÓMENO DE LAS SALAS DE ESCAPE", *Cuadernos de Turismo*, nº 41, (2018); pp. 615-636.
- MACHADO, José Pedro (1987). "Dicionário Etimológico da Língua Portuguesa, Vol. 2? Livros Horizonte, Lisboa.
- in Ciberdúvidas da Língua Portuguesa, <https://ciberduvidas.iscte-iul.pt/consultorio/perguntas/a-origem-de-experimentar/15775> [consultado em 27-12-2022]
- MARUJO, Noémi (2016). "Turismo, Turistas e Experiências: Abordagens Teóricas". Ed. Revista Turydes, *Revista de Turismo y Desarrollo Local*, Vol. 9, nº. 20.
- MARUJO, Noémi (2018). "Eventos Culturais e Autenticidade", *Revista Contribuciones a las Ciencias Sociales*, (diciembre 2018). pp.1-7.
- MODY, Makarand (2016). "Creating Memorable Experiences: How hotels can fight back against Airbnb and other sharing economy providers", *Boston Hospitality Review*, Spring 2016, Volume 4, Issue 2, pp. 1-11
- MONDO, Tiago Savi; GÂNDARA, José Manoel Gonçalves (2017). "O Turismo Experiencial a Partir de uma Perspetiva Socioeconómica Mercadológica". Ed. *Revista Análisis Turístico* 24, Asociación Española de Expertos Científicos en Turismo (AECIT), pp. 26-40.
- NASCIMENTO, Alan Faber (2022). "TURISMO DE EXPERIÊNCIA E A TRADIÇÃO TOURISM EXPERIENCE AND FORGOTTEN TRADITION", *ATELIÊ DO TURISMO*, Ponto de Vista, 6(1), 1-7, jan-jun 2022.
- OBEIDAT, W. (2023), «Rural and traditional cafes and restaurants: a new emerging trend in domestic tourism», *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 74-83. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-08-2022-0098>.
- PEREIRA, Tércio; LIMBERGER, Plabo Flôres (2020). "CEMETERY TOURISM: A STUDY ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES IN CONSOLAÇÃO CEMETERY FROM TRIPADVISOR", *REUNA*, Belo Horizonte - MG, Brasil, v.25, n.1, p. 1-19, Jan. - Mar. 2020.
- PEZZI, Eduardo; SANTOS, Rafael dos (2012). "A experiência turística e o turismo de experiência: aproximações entre a antropologia e o marketing", Ed. *Anais do VII Seminário de Pesquisa em Turismo do Mercosul - Turismo e Paisagem: relação complexa*, 16 e 17 de Novembro, Universidade Federal de Caxias do Sul.

RICHARDS, Greg (2021). "Designing creative Places: the role of creative tourism", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 85.

SARMIENTO, J. (2006). "La regulación de las empresas de turismo activo". *Estudios Turísticos*, 169-170, 103-111

SUMEDHA, Agarwal; Priya Singh (2022). Autenticidade em Experiências Turísticas, *Planeamento e Gestão da Economia da Experiência no Turismo*, p.302-317.