



The Dynamics of Memorable Creative Tourism Experiences

A dinâmica das experiências memoráveis do turismo criativo

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Abstract

Based on a creative stimulus–organism–response model, this qualitative study identifies memorable creative tourism experiences (MCTEs). It examines how creative experiencescapes induce experiential states of creative tourism that shape memorability and behavioural intentions. The study uses netnographic and ethnographic analyses to explore these components in Portugal. The netnographic analysis focused on English-language reviews of workshop-based creative tourism experiences in Portugal, while the ethnographic analysis focused on an Azulejos workshop, which the netnographic analysis identified as the most frequently reviewed. The findings revealed that MCTEs stemmed from participants' engagement with the social, physical-organisational, and co-creative experiencescapes, which evoke experiential states such as authentic involvement, learning, experiential fulfilment, peace of mind, escape, recognition, and belonging, thereby inducing memorable creative experiences and intentions to recommend and re-experience them. The study enhances theoretical understanding of MCTEs and provides practical insights for creative tourism providers.

Keywords: Memorable Tourism Experience, Creative Tourism, Cultural Creative Experiencescape, Co-Creation, Behavioural Intention, Stimuli-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory.

Resumo

Com base num modelo criativo de estímulo-organismo-resposta, este estudo qualitativo identifica experiências memoráveis de turismo criativo (MCTEs). Analisa como os experiencescapes criativos induzem estados experienciais de turismo criativo que moldam a memorabilidade e as intenções comportamentais. O estudo utiliza análises netnográficas e etnográficas para explorar estes componentes em Portugal. A análise netnográfica centrou-se em avaliações em língua inglesa sobre experiências de turismo criativo baseadas em workshops em Portugal, enquanto a análise etnográfica se centrou num workshop de azulejos, que a análise netnográfica revelou ser o workshop mais frequentemente avaliado. Os resultados revelam que as MCTEs resultaram do envolvimento dos participantes com experiencescapes sociais, físico-organizacionais e co-criativos. Estes, por sua vez, evocam estados experienciais como o envolvimento autêntico, a aprendizagem, a realização experiencial, a tranquilidade, a evasão, o reconhecimento e o sentimento de pertença. Tais estados induzem experiências criativas memoráveis, bem como a intenção de as recomendar e de as repetir. O estudo contribui para o aprofundamento da compreensão teórica das MCTEs e oferece implicações práticas para os operadores de turismo criativo.

Palavras-chave: Experiência Turística Memorável, Turismo Criativo, Experiencescape Cultural Criativo, Cocriação, Intenção Comportamental, Teoria Estímulo–Organismo–Resposta (S-O-R).

1. Introduction

Creative tourism (CT) emphasises tourists' active participation, fostering authentic experiences, creative self-expression, and skills development (Richards, 2011), as well as immersive interactions with local culture to foster significant interaction between tourists and residents (Cabeça et al., 2020). According to Richards and Raymond (2000), CT involves visitors actively engaging with local culture and arts and developing their creative potential through destination-specific learning experiences. Creative tourism experiences (CTEs) thus centre on active participation, creative self-expression, learning, and community engagement (Altınay Özdemir, 2021; Cabeça et al., 2020). Under local guidance, tourists learn through co-creation, which enhances memorability (Damayanti & Latifah, 2017).

Within the extensive literature on CTE, the key topics include tourist typologies (Tan, Luh, & Kung, 2014), CT growth (Duxbury et al., 2020), stakeholder attitudes (Lindroth, Ritalahti & Soisalon-Soininen, 2007), CT potential in destinations (Li & Kovacs, 2022), and co-creative tourism experiences (Carvalho, Kastenholz & Carneiro, 2021; Damayanti & Latifah, 2017). Numerous studies show that CTEs' key components include co-creative experiences, existential authenticity, dimensions of creative experiences,



satisfaction, memorability, and behavioural intention (Ali, Ryu & Hussain, 2015; Carvalho et al., 2021; Dean & Suhartanto, 2019; Hsu et al., 2021; Suhartanto et al., 2018; Teixeira-Costa et al., 2023; Zátori, Smith & Puckzo, 2018). Although researchers have investigated affective and behavioural intentions in response to creative encounters, further research is needed on the antecedents and outcomes of CTE. Notably, few studies have specifically examined the creative experiencescape, which is the environmental setting in which experiences are created (Carvalho et al., 2021; Cheng & Chen, 2021). However, the experiencescape is essential to memorable creative tourism experiences (MCTEs) because it provides a structure for understanding how experiences are planned, presented, and perceived (O' Dell, 2005). Accordingly, the present study suggests that creative experiencescapes, where locals and visitors engage in co-creation processes, are essential for creating MCTEs and influencing behavioural intentions (Santoso, Wang & Windasari, 2022).

Building on prior CT research, this study adopts a holistic approach to investigate MCTE dynamics by integrating the creative experiencescape, CT experiential states, and CT experiential response. We propose a stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model grounded in Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) theory to explain how tourists' creative experiential states transform creative experiential stimuli into experiential responses. The model comprises three components: CT experiential stimuli (creative experiencescape), CT experiential states, and CT experiential response (memorability and behavioural intention). The study examines how creative experiencescape components, namely stimuli, experiential states, and experiential outcomes, contribute to a deeper understanding of MCTE dynamics.

CT has gained prominence in both Asia (e.g., Taiwan and Thailand) (Ooi, 2017; Somnuxpong, 2020) and Europe (e.g., France, Spain, and Portugal) (Jelinčić & Léuvela, 2012; Richards, 2011). Portugal was selected as the research context for the present study for three reasons. First, it features prominently in CT scholarship (Cabeça et al., 2020; Remoaldo et al., 2020) as an essential site for examining tourist-local interactions. Second, Portugal has established successful CT initiatives, including nationally recognised programs such as CREATOUR (Bakas & Duxbury, 2018; Gonçalves et al., 2020) and Algarve Craft & Food (2023), as well as local projects such as Loulé Criativo (Lúcio, 2021). Third, these initiatives have produced internationally recognised best practices for delivering MCTEs. Accordingly, this study is deliberately situated within Portugal's well-documented and mature CT ecosystem.

This study employed a two-step sequential qualitative design of netnography and ethnography to explore the dynamics of MCTEs. The study makes four key contributions. First, building on Tan et al.'s (2013) framework, it provides a comprehensive view of MCTEs by examining the three essential elements of the creative learning process (people, environment, and experience) and their dynamic interactions. Second, its active, participant-centred perspective positions tourists as co-creators rather than passive consumers in the formation of experience. Third, to the best of the authors' knowledge, few studies have applied this model to CT research, which provides an integrative theoretical framework for examining the complex structures of CTEs. Fourth, it contributes to country-specific CT profiling by grounding the analysis in workshops unique to Portugal's local culture, thereby extending Portuguese CT scholarship.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Proposed Creative S-O-R Model

The S-O-R model, introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), explains how environmental stimuli (S) elicit internal emotional and cognitive responses (O), which in turn lead to observable behavioural outcomes (R). This cause-and-effect framework elucidates how external stimuli influence behaviours through the organism's emotional and cognitive states (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Sthapit et al., 2024). In tourism research, the model has been predominantly applied using quantitative methods, particularly in studies on heritage tourism (Liu, Park & Wei, 2024; Sthapit et al., 2024), destination image (Asyraff, Hanafiah & Zain, 2024), responsible tourism (Wang et al., 2024), and hotel experiences (Choi & Kandampully, 2019; Şahin & Kılıçlar, 2023). In contrast, few tourism studies have applied the model qualitatively (Dogru-Dastan & Yılmaz, 2024) or to explore CT. Cheng and Chen (2021) adopted the model to explain stimuli as people, products, activities, and environments; the organism as an interaction; and responses as attitudes and behavioural intentions in CT.

Previous tourism studies have focused on external or internal factors that are the foundation for decision-making, such as atmosphere (Choi & Kandampully, 2019), authenticity (Liu et al., 2024), experiencescape (Sthapit et al., 2024), and co-creation (Wang et al., 2024), as well as subconscious processes (Isa, Alsharif & Salleh). We propose that the creative experiencescape is a key CT experiential stimulus for MCTEs. More specifically, CT experiential stimuli (S) comprise the social, physical-organisational, and experiential environments that shape MCTEs, including the creative experiencescape and co-creative interactions.

The organism comprises the internal emotional and cognitive processes mediating stimuli and responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In tourism studies, these often include emotion (Tsaur, Luoh & Syue, 2015), satisfaction (Choi & Kandampully, 2019), and personal norms (Fakfare et al., 2024). In our study, CT experiential states (O) are adopted as creative experiential states, reflecting

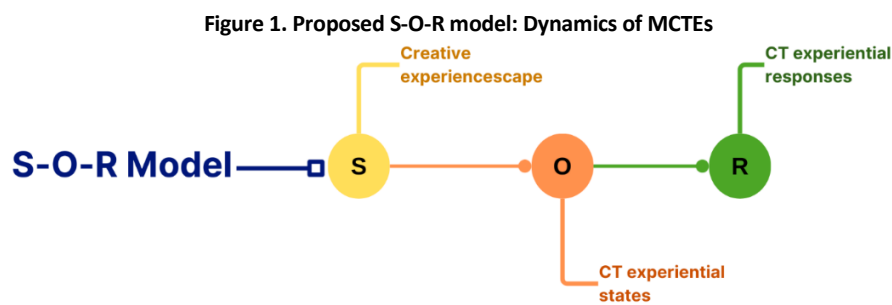


tourists' affective and cognitive states during CTEs, which manifest as feelings of authentic involvement, learning, experiential fulfilment, peace of mind, recognition and belonging, and escape.

The response, conceptualised as affective, cognitive and behavioural outcomes, includes satisfaction (Liu et al., 2024), place attachment (Sthapit et al., 2024), behavioural intention (Şahin & Kılıçlar, 2023), and loyalty (Hsu et al., 2021). Previous CT studies have shown that behavioural intention is a key outcome (Ali et al., 2015; Dean & Suhartanto, 2019; Hung, Lee & Huang, 2014) while memorability is a strong predictor (Campos et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020). Accordingly, we adopted memorability as the cognitive-emotional response, and recommendation and re-experience intention as behavioural responses in MCTEs (Figure 1). These outcomes reflect tourists' affective responses and subsequent actions, highlighting how memorable experiences can influence intentions to re-experience or recommend the experience. Understanding MCTE dynamics is crucial for improving CT strategies and tourist engagement. Therefore, our research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How does creative experiencescape shape creative experiential states in MCTEs?

RQ2: How does creative experiencescape contribute to memorability and behavioural intentions through creative experiential states?



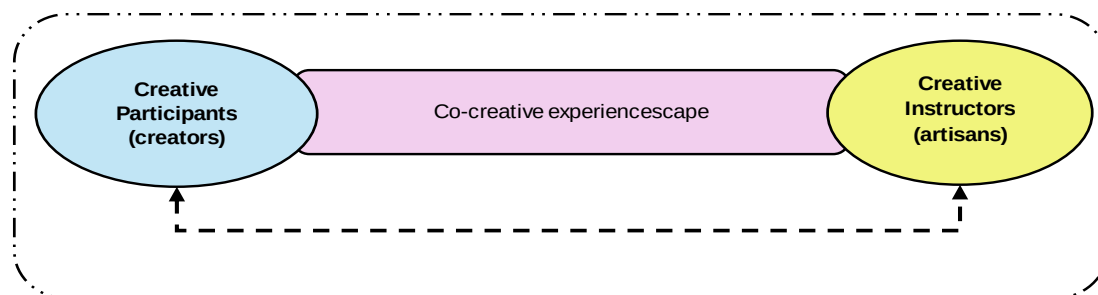
Source: Authors' elaboration.

2.1.1 Stimuli (S) dimension: Creative experiencescape

The experiencescape encompasses various environmental factors, such as physical, social, and organisational dimensions (Mossberg, 2007), that significantly shape overall tourist experiences (Campos et al., 2016). According to Richards and Wilson (2007), CT destinations are shaped by both their physical environment and the local creative community. Thus, the experiencescape can provide unique, authentic encounters through hands-on activities and interactions with local artisans (Carvalho et al., 2021). Similarly, Alvarez (2010) notes that CT leverages creative design to deliver distinctive, hard-to-replicate experiences that leave tourists with memorable encounters.

According to Cheng and Chen (2021), CT spaces are shaped by products, people, environments, and activities. Tan et al. (2013) add hygiene factors, ambient elements, sounds, spatial design, building and landscape design, leadership, activity routes, and situational control as key indicators of the experiencescape, while Carvalho et al. (2021) find that both the human and physical experiencescape are involved in wine tourism. Furthermore, this experiencescape exemplifies co-creation, whereby consumers play a central role in production, reflecting the transition from a service-oriented to an experience-driven economy (Andrade-Cunha et al., 2025; Campos et al., 2016; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). In MCTEs, active participation by both locals and tourists fosters meaningful experiences (Carvalho et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2013). Richards and Marques (2012) define co-creation as engagement through participation, involvement, and interaction, while Tan et al. (2014) portray tourists as active co-creators of their experiences. This collaboration enables tourists and locals to exchange knowledge and values, thereby fostering mutual understanding, cultural respect, and more authentic and meaningful intercultural experiences (Cabeça et al., 2020). Accordingly, we argue that, through its social, physical, and co-creative dimensions, the creative experiencescape provides a space where creative individuals engage in co-creation (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Co-creative experiencescape



Source: Authors' elaboration.

2.1.2 Organism dimension: Creative experiential states

Creative experiential states capture participants' internal emotional and cognitive responses within the creative experiencescape. Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy framework divides creative experiences into four dimensions: entertainment, education, esthetics, and escapism. By actively participating in the experience economy, mentally and physically, tourists' experiences become more meaningful and memorable. Pine and Gilmore's (1998) active, participatory experience shares qualities with MCTEs. Thus, CT is an experience-based tourism that enables travellers to develop their creative potential by actively participating in destination-specific experiences (Richards & Raymond, 2000; Richards, 2025). Tourists are positioned as active participants in the experiential process rather than passive observers, thereby promoting skill development across a variety of creative environments. According to Hung et al. (2014), the essential components of MCTEs include sense of achievement, participatory learning, and direct engagement with instructors are essential components of MCTEs, while Ali et al. (2015) identified the following important features: escape, recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interaction, and learning.

Another significant MCTE component is existential authenticity, which is critical for meaningful experiences, fostering real-time engagement and personal development (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). In tourism, it encompasses objective, constructive, postmodern, and experiential perspectives (Rickly, 2022; Uslu et al., 2024). Existential authenticity, rooted in existentialist philosophy, focuses on an individual's integrity during travel (Macann, 2014). Wang (1999) asserts that tourists prioritise personal experiences over object authenticity, seeking genuine connections with local cultures and traditions (Uslu et al., 2024). This authenticity is particularly significant in MCTEs, which centre on activities such as workshops and cultural immersion (Duxbury & Richards, 2019). In MCTEs, travellers often define an experience as authentic based on the richness of its experiential activities (Richards, 2011). Existential authenticity significantly influences tourists' fulfilment and attitudes towards destinations (Hsu et al., 2021). Given its unique involvement in MCTEs, existential authenticity is treated as authentic involvement in this study. Experiential fulfilment, a vital factor influencing affective and behavioural outcomes, reflects tourists' overall contentment with their experiences (Song et al., 2012). In CT, experiential fulfilment is shaped by workshop expectations, quality, diversity, and uniqueness of experiences (Ali et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2020). Studies by Ali et al. (2015) and Hung et al. (2014) indicate that high experiential fulfilment with MCTEs is associated with positive behavioural intentions (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019). By enhancing memorability and behavioural intentions, the present study includes them as antecedents to the suggested outcomes model.

2.1.3 Response dimension: CT experiential responses

Memorability refers to tourists' ability to recall experiences long after (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick, 2012). CT fosters memorability through unique, personalised, and emotionally engaging interactions with local resources that create memorable on-site experiences (Carvalho et al., 2021), which, in turn, shape behavioural intentions (Ali et al., 2015; Hung et al., 2014). Hence, memorability is a critical CT outcome. Behavioural intention, including recommendations and revisit intentions, is central to tourism research (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019; Huang, Chang & Backman, 2018). Positive perceptions of and satisfaction with MCTEs lead to higher revisit and recommendation rates (Ali et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2013). Here, we focus on two behavioural intention indicators: intention to recommend and desire to re-experience.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study employed netnographic and ethnographic methods to investigate MCTE dynamics through the S-O-R model. The netnographic phase, guided by Kozinet's (2010) framework, involved collecting online data and analysing participant experiences through reviews and discussions. Based on Madden's (2010) guidelines, the ethnographic phase employed participant observation to further explore MCTEs. Insights from the netnographic analysis informed the ethnographic study, ensuring a systematic and comprehensive approach to provide an in-depth understanding of S-O-R interactions in MCTEs.



3.1 Sequential Research Process and Data Collection

Table 1 summarises the study's structured planning, data collection, and data analysis sequence.

Table 1. Overall research process

Procedure	Planning	Data collection	Data analysis
First step: Netnographic study	- Artistic and cultural workshops in Portugal (f:35) - Airbnb	- All English reviews (f: 5,767) - Retrieved February 2024-March 2024 - Time spans 2017-2024 1,156 single-spaced transcript pages	- Thematic inductive analysis - NVivo software - Quotations in: - Netnographic study: Ema, Exp8, 2023 - Ethnographic study: observation notes (ON), informal interviews (e.g., P1), and photographs
Second step: Ethnographic study	- Loulé, Algarve region, Portugal - Azulejos (tile painting) workshop - the most frequently reviewed experience in the netnographic study	- Three field trips: - Registration stage - Immersion stage - Picking up stage - Data included field notes as: - Participant observation - Interview - Photographs - April 2024 60 single-spaced transcript pages	

Source: Authors' elaboration.

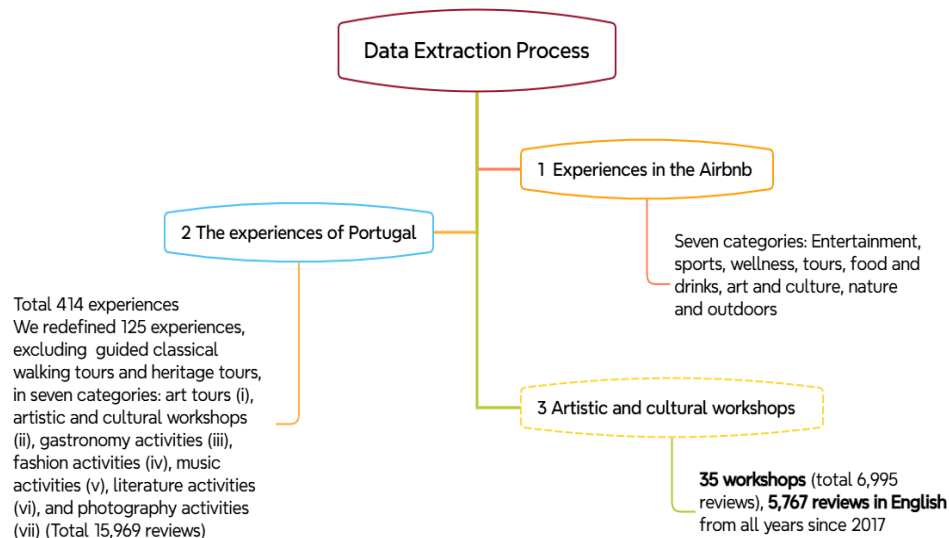
3.1.1 Study 1: Netnographic study

Netnography, a qualitative approach for gaining cultural insights through systematic, immersive use of digital observations (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024), involves three phases: *entrée*, data collection, and analysis.

Entrée: This phase includes selecting relevant, active, interactive, diverse, and data-rich online communities aligned with the research questions (Kozinets, 2010). Airbnb was chosen because it emphasises sharing CTEs, while its "on-site experiences" (since 2016) and "online experiences" (since 2020) enable deeper engagement with local communities (Airbnb, 2023).

Data collection: Data were collected between February 23 and March 3, 2024, in three stages. Initially, 414 art and culture experiences in Portugal were identified on Airbnb, reduced to 125 relevant activities (artistic and cultural workshops, gastronomy, music, and literature), and excluded were classical and heritage tours, yielding 15,969 reviews. Thirty-eight workshops on intangible cultural heritage (e.g., Azulejos tile painting and pottery) were then selected for in-depth analysis, of which 35, spanning 2017–2024, yielded 5,767 reviews (Figure 3). English-language comments were preferred to ensure international tourist engagement and accessibility for academic audiences, while non-English-language comments were excluded because their English translations cannot fully portray the cultural nuances inherent in the original comments, thereby distorting the writers' perspectives. Limiting the analysis to English-language comments maintained internal consistency and prevented meaning losses that could compromise the findings' reliability. The final dataset was 1,156 single-spaced transcript pages.

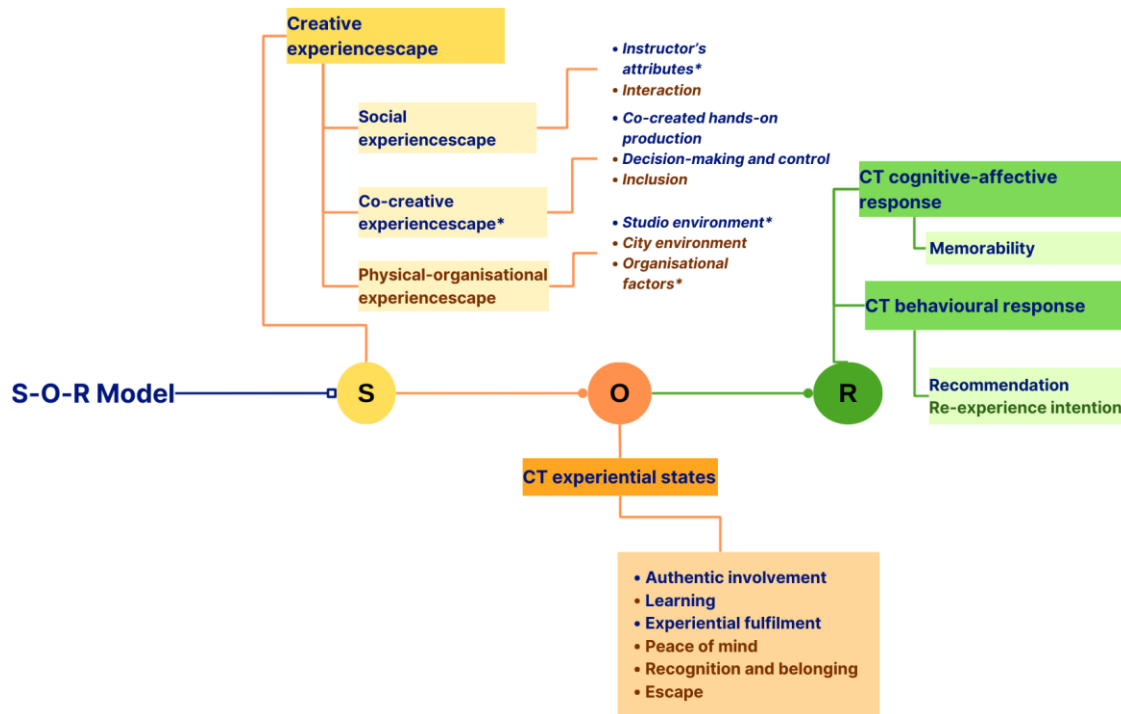
Figure 3. Netnographic Data Extraction



Source: Authors' elaboration



Figure 4. MTCE Dynamics S-O-R Model



*Total code density: 15,673 from 35 experiences, defined for the first time in this study. Notes: Themes listed in intensity order; blue themes: higher coding frequency (Creative experiencescape:46.46%; CT experiential states:32.42%; Memorability: 11.03%; Behavioural response: 10.09%). Descriptions of themes and subthemes in Appendix 1.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

3.1.2 Study 2: Ethnographic study

Participant observation (observation reports, interviews, and photographs) was conducted during three field trips. Ethnographic data collection involves immersion within a group to obtain detailed, first-hand insights (Madden, 2010) through direct observational experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the context. The research site, Loulé, in southern Portugal's Algarve region, was chosen as a prominent CT location, with the Azulejos workshop selected as the focal point because the netnographic analysis indicated it was the most frequently reviewed experience.

Three field trips were conducted in 2024: a) Pre-Experience Visit focused on registration, observing the studio's physical aspects and surroundings, and meeting the instructor; b) 150-minute Workshop Immersion lasting 150 minutes and providing unique insights into MCTE dynamics. A Portuguese instructor led the workshop with 13 participants (11 foreigners; 2 locals). It was conducted in English, facilitating interviews and observations; c) Post-Experience Visit to collect completed tiles and gather additional participant feedback.

Field notes were carefully recorded both on-site and post-experience. Observation and interview notes produced a 60-page single-spaced transcript for analysis (Table 1).

Azulejos culture. Small decorative ceramic Azulejos tiles, often with intricate panels, reflect Portugal's intangible cultural heritage. Azulejos originate from Arabic *al-zulayj*, meaning "polished stone" (Campbell, 2019). Azulejos tiles were introduced in Portugal in the 15th century (Mitchell, 2017), influenced by Andalusian and Maghreb traditions, and became significant architectural decorative elements in the 16th century. Initially dominated by geometric and Islamic patterns, by the 17th-18th centuries, they depicted religious scenes, mythological subjects, and everyday life (Campbell, 2019). They also represent Portugal's culture, history, and aesthetic values. Traditional hand-painting techniques are preserved and experienced through CT workshops, thereby maintaining this cultural heritage.

3.2 Data Analysis

A two-step, sequential, hybrid thematic analysis approach was followed, combining the openness of inductive coding with the theoretical rigour of deductive coding to thoroughly explore and interpret the data. NVivo facilitated the process by reducing technical complexity and simplifying the labour-intensive analysis of large datasets (Wong, 2008). Both studies adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis framework: familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes,



reviewing themes, defining themes, and conducting the final analysis. A three-phase coding process was implemented: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

First, the netnographic data and ethnographic field notes were systematically reviewed to achieve familiarity with the dataset. Second, initial codes were generated inductively through line-by-line coding. Third, common codes were selected and grouped through axial coding to identify candidate sub-themes and main themes based on code similarities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and address the research question by revealing theme relationships (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Fourth, the coded data were assessed for addressing the research question and for the operation of themes across the dataset (Clarke & Braun, 2014). Fifth, a final selective coding review was conducted to define the final themes. As an intra-coder, the first author assigned sub-themes to each main theme, while the inter-coder was an independent coder. Two external researchers then reviewed the coded dataset and codebook. Following minor adjustments, the coders and reviewers finalised the S-O-R model of four main and 12 sub-themes: creative experiencescape (social, physical-organisational, and co-creative experiencescape); creative experiential states (authentic involvement, learning, experiential fulfilment, peace of mind, escape, recognition and belonging); cognitive-emotional response (memorability); and behavioural response (re-experience intention and recommendation). Consensus was achieved through several iterations regarding the themes. Sixth, the themes were reinforced through literature review and enriched through discussions and participant quotations. For the netnographic study, annotations included participant names, file labels, and years (e.g., Ema, Exp8, 2023). For the ethnographic study, annotations included observation notes (ON), informal interviews (e.g., P1, P2), and photographs.

To ensure the findings' trustworthiness, the study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, supported by the principles of reflexive thematic analysis. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the data, iterative coding, continuous theme refinement, direct quotations, and consideration of negative cases to minimise potential bias. Dependability was ensured by systematically documenting each analysis stage, maintaining an audit trail, and using reflexive memos to track and justify analytical decisions. Transferability was enhanced through thick descriptions of the MCTE context and detailed accounts of participants' affective and cognitive experiences (both in the netnographic and ethnographic phases). Reflexivity, which strengthens confirmability by acknowledging researcher-participant interactions, was ensured by taking an outsider observer role in the netnographic phase and an insider participant role in the ethnographic phase. Confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in participant-generated data rather than researcher assumptions and by incorporating diverse perspectives. The two-stage design (netnographic and ethnographic) increased the study's originality and overall trustworthiness. Finally, direct participant quotations were included to enhance the analysis's validity and depth while enabling readers to better engage with and understand the raw data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

4. Findings

The two studies (netnographic and ethnographic) investigated how co-creative experiences and the creative experiencescape (S) contribute to creative experiential states (O), and how these experiential states drive memorability and behavioural intentions (R).

4.1 Study 1. Netnographic study

An Excel file recorded the descriptive data for the reviews (year, experience type, cost, duration, and instructor language and gender). Most reviews were posted between 2018 and 2023, with a noticeable decline during the COVID-19 period (2020-2021) and a peak in 2023. Azulejos workshops were the most popular creative experience (73.2% of workshops). The experiences cost €49.1 and lasted approximately 2.5 hours on average. Most were presented by female instructors (76.3%) in four languages: English (100%), Portuguese (95.0%), Spanish (39.4%), and French (18.4%). Most instructors (71.0%) used multiple languages (39.4%), underscoring Portugal's significant potential for CT.

Regarding word density from reviews of 35 experiences, the most frequently occurring words in the netnographic dataset of 344,750 words (15,673 codes) were "experience" (f=4,665), "great" (f=3,080), "tiles" (f=2,771), "recommend" (f=1,931), "time" (f=1,911), and "fun" (f=1,801). The code density of the four main themes was 46.46% for CT experiential stimuli (social, physical-organisational, and co-creative experiencescapes), 32.42% for CT experiential states (authentic involvement, learning, experiential fulfilment, peace of mind, recognition and belonging, escape), 11.03% for cognitive-affective response(memorability) and 10.09% for and behavioral response (recommendation and re-experience intention). Figure 4 presents the creative S-O-R model explaining MCTE dynamics.

4.1.1 CT experiential stimuli. Creative experiencescape.

Creative experiencescape had three sub-themes:

- (1) social experiencescape
- (2) physical-organisational experiencescape
- (3) co-creative experiencescape



Creative experiencescape is a sensory-rich experiencescape (Carvalho et al., 2021). Our findings supported Richards and Wilson (2007) by showing that CT destinations are shaped by social, physical-organisational, and co-creative experiencescape, not solely by the physical environment.

The social creative experiencescape (20.48%) generated lasting impressions through the interactive orchestration of CTE environments, particularly instructors' attributes (personal, interpersonal, and professional qualities) and interaction factors. Instructor attributes were a key MCTE driver. Participants highlighted qualities like supportive attitude, encouraging behaviour, patience, approachability, non-judgmental guidance, and pedagogical and mentorship roles. Instructors were frequently portrayed as mentors, hosts, artists, storytellers, and facilitators. Participants strongly appreciated their guidance and presence. Participants frequently indicated existential fulfilment with their interactive experiences (e.g., meeting new people, sharing experiences, having a collaborative atmosphere, and interacting with hosts):

"Ines was so nice and is such a great storyteller" (Aira, Exp27, 2024); "Very friendly host, speaking several languages, and who manages to share their passion" (Bruno, Exp2, 2020); "Hugo for sure is an expert at his craft" (Valerie, Exp24, 2020).

"The workshop is a wonderful experience to submerge in the culture ... you also get to meet new people from all over the world." (Amy, Exp1, 2023); "Really enjoyed painting the tile ... can't wait to pick up the tile. Highly recommend and it's also a good way to meet new friends!" (Lucia, Exp5, 2023)

Co-creative experiencescape (13.66%) emerged from participants' experiences, including co-created hands-on production, inclusion, decision-making and control. Participants actively co-created their own values, determining what is valuable and how much (Mathis et al., 2016; Tan et al., 2014). Co-created hands-on production centred on unique creative experiences. Our study is the first to explicitly conceptualise this dimension in CT by showing how co-created handmade products have tangible affordances shaping MCTEs. Participants emphasised that active participation enabled them to design creative, personalised products, often using descriptors such as "custom-made," "unique to my taste," "my own artwork," and "self-crafted souvenir." They particularly described co-created souvenirs as meaningfully and influentially contributing to positive MCTEs.

"We really enjoyed getting hands-on and making the tiles into our own little masterpieces that we could take home as keepsakes" (Leong, Exp11, 2023); "Such a personal, totally hands-on workshop where you were encouraged to use your creativity to design your own custom jewelry item. And the product was perfect!" (Karen, Exp23, 2023).

Participants engaged in independent design choices, expressed personal ideas, and exercised control over creative outcomes, encompassing decision-making and control, enabling them to explore and exercise their creative freedom.

"Each person created their own pattern design on a piece of paper; the host then digitised and printed it on tiles. Each step was carried out at the participant's own discretion" (Zarifah, Exp1, 2023).

Inclusion was another key co-creative experience dimension. Participants highlighted the inclusivity of MCTEs through language-sensitive facilitation, skill-level accommodations, equitable participation in production, and inclusive guidance overall. This inclusive experiencescape fostered diversity and accessibility, enabling everyone to participate freely and express their creativity, regardless of skill, language, age, or cultural background.

"Language was no barrier to learning" (Susan, Exp7, 2018); "We participated as three people: me, my 6-year-old son, and my husband ... three people with very different tastes!" (Claudia, Exp27, 2022); "a brief introduction to the history of the tiles in the country, we love to be able to make our own and listen a little about this artwork that is part of the culture of Portugal" (Carla, Exp11, 2019).

Physical-organisational creative experiencescape (12.32%) was the third key creative experiencescape component. The physical experiencescape was frequently expressed through studio environment (e.g., atmosphere, design, cleanliness, tools, and setup), city environment (e.g., accessibility, surroundings, and proximity to attractions), and organisational factors (e.g., timing, well-structured planning, and CTE level differentiation). Participants were impressed by well-equipped, clean, well-designed studios, a convenient location, attractive surroundings, and proximity to local attractions, alongside effective organisational factors.

"Hugo's studio is such a beautiful space, modern, clean, and equipped with all the supplies you could ever need" (Theresa, Exp24, 2023); "The farm was easy to find via Uber" (Lauren, Exp12, 2019); "The process is easy, the two hours are sufficient to complete one tile" (Dewi, Exp5, 2022).

4.1.2 Creative experiential states. The creative experiential states contributing to MCTEs had six sub-themes:

- (1) authentic involvement
- (2) learning
- (3) experiential fulfilment



- (4) peace of mind
- (5) escape
- (6) Recognition and belonging

Creative experiential states included cognitive and affective MCTE states (32.42%). *Existential authenticity*, the feeling of being true to oneself in creative contexts (Wang, 1999), was a critical MCTE antecedent. Participants commonly reported that connection to Portugal's culture, transformative experiences, and immersion in local culture encouraged them to abandon traditional tourist experiences in favour of self-discovery and cultural immersion. Participants described CTEs as distinctive once-in-a-lifetime activities that enabled personal choice, reflected in feeling truly involved, being themselves, not feeling like a tourist, genuinely participating, and deeply engaging, with affective and behavioural effects.

"It made us feel part of the local culture and gave us unique moments. We didn't want to leave anymore" (Sara, Exp27, 2024); "an authentic experience that not only teaches you about the history of Portugal but also the practice behind the art" (Jessica, Exp2, 2022); "The workshop gave me an understanding of the local history" (Sunny, Exp8, 2019).

Learning was the second most important aspect. Participants often claimed that creative activities led to meaningful educational growth, new skills, and greater curiosity about the unknown. Participants valued enhanced learning in CTEs to acquire new skills, engage in informative sessions, and access meaningful educational opportunities.

"Loved learning the history of the traditional Portuguese tiles, and the technique for painting them" (Tara, Exp20, 2023).

Experiential fulfilment. Participants reported strong experiential fulfilment, indicating that the experience exceeded their expectations and was significantly enhanced by their positive CTEs. Experiential fulfilment increased engagement and memorability, as reflected in expressions like "better than expected," "loved every moment," and "pleased with everything."

"It was an amazing experience! I especially liked how the instructor ... Now I would like to try and learn more about it" (Rebecca, Exp13, 2020); "it was the perfect finale! ... Agathe's workshop was relaxing and such a stellar creative outlet after learning so much about Lisbon's tile history throughout our trip. We left with beautiful tiles we'll cherish forever!" (Candace, Exp1, 2024).

Participants reported engaging in MCTEs for peace of mind, meaning the creation of a calm, safe, and comfortable environment during creative experiences. Their experiences fostered peace of mind and a sense of meditation, frequently expressed as "relaxing," "stress-free," and "meditative."

"I felt at home in her studio. After the class, I felt I had a new friend in an unfamiliar city!" (Hyojun, Exp7, 2019); "The workshop was very meditative and calming, as well as enjoyable connecting to other participants" (Ruth, Exp8, 2018).

Escape refers to taking a break from daily routines, trying new activities, and disconnecting from the world. Participants mentioned "taking a pleasant break" and "feeling liberated," and experienced recognition and a sense of belonging within the MCTEs through instructor and peer acknowledgement, feeling valued and appreciated, group cohesion, acceptance, and interpersonal connections.

"I appreciated the creative freedom" (Celeste, Exp1, 2024); "This experience was a good escape from all the touristy stuff. It was an excellent place to experiment and create new things" (Veronica, Exp1, 2023); "Manu [the instructor] immediately made me feel welcome! Even though I was the only workshop-attendant, she gave her best to create a special experience" (Tara, Exp13, 2019).

4.1.3 CT outcome responses. Three primary CT outcomes emerged from the interaction of the creative experiencescape through creative experiential states:

- (1) memorability
- (2) recommendation
- (3) re-experience intention

CTE's primary outcome was memorability (11.03%). Participants expressed their MCTEs as "a gift for themselves," "unforgettable experiences," "left a lasting impression," and "engraved in my memory." In line with Kim et al.'s (2012) claim that the experience's uniqueness significantly influences memorability, participants often emphasised this relationship, particularly through unique and novel creative experiences within co-creative, interactive environments. Participants most frequently attributed memorability to CT

experiential stimuli in MCTEs, particularly social experiencescape and co-creative experiencescape. Memorability also predicted behavioural intentions, the behavioural outcome of MCTEs.

"I was able to have a good time with everyone at the same time. Thinking about the colour design, cutting, and pasting the mosaic plates is so interesting ... Eileen was a very friendly, cheerful, and lovely woman... It is recommended for couples, groups, and families because they can participate from children to adults. I think it will be a good memory to try to incorporate the experience, as well as visiting places in Lisbon. I am very satisfied with the original souvenirs, with great memories. It's also a great recommendation for things to do when you go to Lisbon" (Yuka, Exp7, 2018).

"Whether you are a family with kids or travelling alone and want to participate in something different, unique, and unforgettable, this experience will leave a lasting impression" (Bryan, Exp12, 2019).

MTCE behavioural outcomes were recommendations and re-experience intention (10.09%), particularly recommendations. Participants regarded their MCTEs as essential for everyone and highly recommendable (6.72%). Participants mentioned re-experience intention less frequently (3.37%), although those expressing high satisfaction also clearly intended to re-experience MCTEs, as indicated by phrases like "plan to return," "repeat this experience," and "make this a tradition."

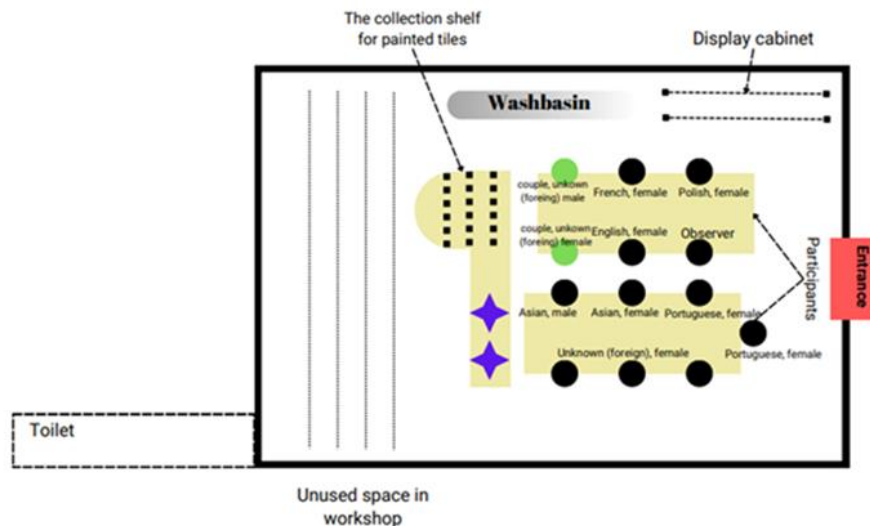
"Not only did we learn about the art of Portuguese tiles, but we also left with a one-of-a-kind souvenir; this workshop is a must-try experience for anyone visiting Lisbon" (Bradley, Exp1, 2023); "We learned some of the city's histories ... I can only say that next time I visit Lisbon, I will prioritise doing this again!" (Brooke, Exp7, 2018); "Painting the tiles was so much fun, we will 100% come back when we are visiting Porto again!" (Martina, Exp11, 2023).

4.2 Study 2. Ethnographic study findings

This ethnographic study involved 13 participants (11 females and 2 males; 11 foreigners and 2 locals) attending a morning 150-minute Azulejos (tile painting) workshop in Loulé, Portugal, on Saturday, April 5, 2024. The group included single Polish, French, and English participants, two Asians, and the observer (first author, Turkish). Five foreign nationalities were not identified. Ages ranged from the 30s to the 50s. The workshop was conducted in a seated setting in English by a Portuguese female ceramic artisan in her 40s (Figure 5). Photograph 1 illustrates the CTE process.

The ethnographic study developed from the netnographic findings to provide a deeper explanation of MCTEs. Their dynamics relied on the same S-O-R model.

Figure 5. Azulejos workshop seating plan



Source: Elaboration by participant observer

4.2.1 CT experiential stimuli

Creative experiencescape. This ethnographic study focused more on the physical-organisational experiencescape than the netnographic study did. Various studio-related indicators, both positive and negative, were identified, including disorderly appearance, hygiene concerns, lack of personal space, and insufficient materials. Nevertheless, the participants were fully immersed in the experience.



"There was no space for movement between those sitting close to each other, even those seated at two tables in a row. There was also dust everywhere. However, the participants did not seem to mind, as they were fully focused on the experience." (ON)

The location was a favourable aspect of the physical-organisational experiencescape, particularly regarding accessibility through convenient transportation options: "The studio was located in the city centre and was easily accessible by public transport" (ON).

The social experiencescape, involving the instructor's attributes, critically contributed to overall MCTEs. Indicators included a helpful and friendly instructor, language proficiency, challenges associated with large group sizes, and effective communication skills: "The instructor was helpful and friendly and explained the steps of making Azulejos fluently in English" (ON).

Physical proximity and shared spaces increased interaction: "Participants mostly communicated with those next to or opposite them" (ON) (Figure 5), while small groups fostered interaction during the creative experience. The participants, who sat at two separate tables (7 and 6 people each), primarily communicated within their table groups.

Participants also positively evaluated organisational factors: "It was a well-organised event, and the duration was sufficient for me" (P4, Polish participant, female, 40s). The instructor structured the workshop as introduction–development–conclusion, clearly outlining each stage initially before guiding participants through practical implementation (Photograph 1).

The observational findings confirmed the significant role of co-creation affordances in MCTEs through tailored preparations, souvenirs, and unique personal designs: "The instructor prepared the materials and arranged the setting before participants arrived. Furthermore, the instructor reminded participants to sign their tiles so they could identify their own designs" (ON). Furthermore, because participants chose their tile designs and worked at their own pace, given their creativity approach, each participant's creative process unfolded individually. CTEs were characterised by participant diversity: "Men and women of various ages, nationalities, and skill levels participated. There were experienced participants as well as first-time participants" (ON). Respect for language differences was an important indicator: "The instructor spoke in English, but two local participants asked questions in Portuguese because their English was insufficient. However, communication in a different language did not affect other participants" (ON). These findings deepen the understanding of co-creation components within MCTEs.

Photograph 1. Azulejos workshop stages (introduction-development-conclusion).



Source: Photographs taken by the observer.



4.1.2 Creative experiential states

The ethnographic study supported the netnographic findings in that participant enriched their MCTEs by exploring their identities and expressing themselves through authentic and unexpected involvement in a new hobby: "I joined thinking I wouldn't be able to do it, but even though it's not perfect, just trying made me feel good. I didn't expect this at all" (Polish participant, female, 40s); "I had no idea how the deep blue tiles I saw on the walls of houses in the streets were painted and fired, but now I've learned how it's done, and I'm pleased" (French participant, female, in her 40s).

Learning was a core MCTE component, reflected in the enjoyment of learning and local culture. The instructor systematically introduced each Azulejo production stage (drawing, transferring, painting, shading, finishing, and firing), revisiting key points to address questions. Participants appeared highly engaged, thoroughly enjoying the workshop for cultural knowledge and hands-on practice (Photograph 1), as revealed by various behaviours:

"All participants were smiling. At the end of the workshop, they lingered by the door, continuing to chat before leaving. They discussed which workshops they planned to attend in the coming days" (ON).

They also gained experiential fulfilment from designing their souvenir: "I'm satisfied to return home with a gift I made for myself during the holiday" (English participant, female, in her 50s).

Peace of mind was evidenced by relaxation, stress relief, and the absence of tension: "everyone was focused on their tile" (ON). Participants confirmed this: "It's very relaxing" (Polish participant, female, 40s); "Yes, it's perfect for relieving stress" (English participant, female, 50s). Participants experienced the workshop as an escape: "I was very bored and overwhelmed with my daily life. I wanted to do something different, discover myself, and learn a traditional craft of Portugal" (Polish participant, female, 40s). A sense of togetherness and connection enhanced recognition and belonging: "Although participants worked individually, the environment fostered a sense of camaraderie that encouraged them to help one another" (ON).

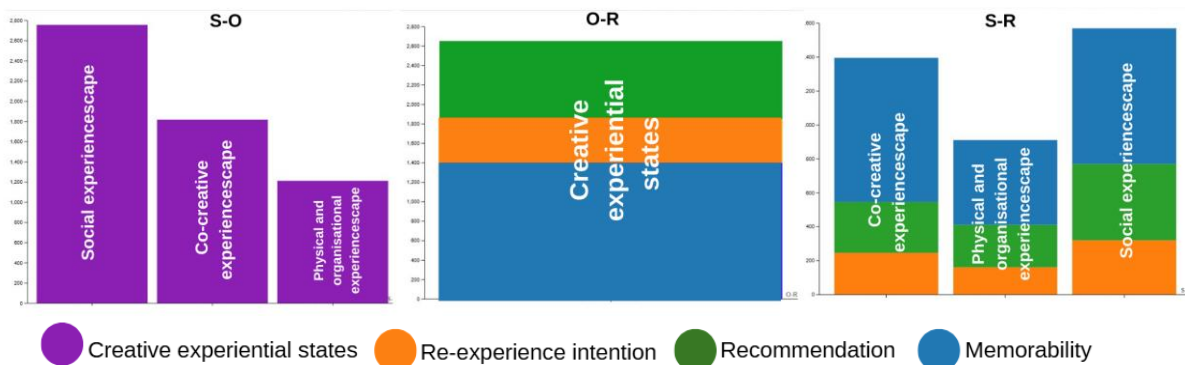
4.1.2.3 CT outcome responses

The participants perceived their experiences as more vivid and memorable when they felt liberated in the creative process, gained new knowledge, and created unique, meaningful personal items. Because they would go home with personally designed tiles, participants felt their experience and the destination would have a lasting impact:

"I painted three tiles, always reminding me of Loulé and Portugal" (Polish participant, female, in her 40s); "It was a very enjoyable and unforgettable experience. I will hang my tiles on the walls of my home" (French participant, female, in her 40s).

Following their MCTEs, the participants exhibited recommendation and re-experience intentions (P4 and P5; English and Polish), noting a willingness to attend a different setting: "Trying a different environment would be enjoyable" (P4). Confirming the netnographic findings, participants expressed strong recommendation intentions: "I will recommend it to my friends" (P2, Asian, male, 30s); "It's an experience everyone should try at least once" (P3, French, female, 40s).

Figure 6. Inter-code relationship map of proposed MCTE dynamics



Source: Authors' elaboration.

4.3. Overall findings of MCTE dynamics.

We examined the contributions of the proposed MCTE components using an inter-code relationship map grounded in the S-O-R model (Figure 6). Participants' creative experiential states were most strongly influenced by the social experiencescape, followed by the co-creative experiencescape and the physical-organisational experiencescape. Creative experiential states contributed to



memorability rather than behavioural responses. Among the experiencescape dimensions, the social experiencescape and the co-creative experiencescape were the strongest contributors to memorability. Our proposed model further identified the social experiencescape, particularly instructors' attributes and interactivity, as the key stimulus shaping participants' positive emotions, cognitive engagement, and MTCE-related affective and behavioural responses. Co-creative experiencescape (inclusivity, co-creation affordances, and interaction among creative individuals) significantly shaped participants' overall MCTE experiences.

5. Discussion

By identifying specific MCTE components, this study addressed an important gap in the CT literature while offering practical insights for experience design. Although Airbnb reviews are inherently potentially positively biased, this study strengthened its interpretations by complementing netnographic data with ethnographic observations, enabling a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of social interactions and co-creation processes. This enhanced the credibility of the findings while acknowledging the limitations of user-generated data. The emergent themes, which predominantly reflected positive experiences, revealed a dynamic interplay among MCTE components. These positive experiences were closely aligned with existential authenticity (Wang, 1999), emphasising participants' emotional transformation and deeper cultural connection.

Our findings revealed that creative experiencescape consistently enhanced participants' creative experiential states and memorability, while instructor traits, mentoring, and communication significantly influenced MCTEs. Furthermore, while interaction is inherently part of co-creative processes (Cabeça et al., 2020; Carvalho et al., 2021), we classified it as a primary component of the social experiencescape because it involves participants' social connections and communication with each other and with the instructor. Hence, we define the co-creative experiencescape as relating to participants' active involvement in the production and design of creative outputs. Specifically, co-created hands-on production, inclusion, decision-making, and control are key dimensions of the experiencescape, in which participants, guided by instructor knowledge and support, created their designs according to their own preferences and control, thereby crucially affecting their experiential states and outcomes. This finding confirms that the co-creative experiencescape enhances memorability through the active participation of both locals and tourists, as noted by Carvalho et al. (2021). Overall, as Santoso et al. (2022) found, fostering emotional and cognitive states led to a creative experiencescape that profoundly increased memorability and participants' revisit intentions.

Authentic involvement, related to self-realisation and a sense of self-control, increased memorability by immersing participants in MCTEs. This supports Chang's (2022) view that creative experiences go beyond artistic expression to become transforming journeys of personal discovery and cultural connection. The learning associated with acquiring new skills, exploring creativity, and mastering a craft promoted participants' creative engagement and increased memorability through a culturally immersive first-time experience. Such once-in-a-lifetime experiences are particularly impactful in creating unforgettable memories (Ali et al., 2015). Consistent with Richards and Marques (2012), through learning new skills and engaging with cultural patterns, participants immersed themselves in local life through theme-based edutainment, thereby deepening CTs. A strong sense of belonging and recognition increased memorability and behavioural responses. Participants who experienced achievement, unique learning opportunities, and meaningful interactions reported greater positivity and a stronger intention to engage in the future. Participation in MCTEs also reduced anxiety and loneliness while increasing self-esteem. Escape, peace of mind, recognition, and belonging were gateways to identity exploration and tranquillity.

Consistent with previous studies (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019; Huang et al., 2018), CT outcomes included behavioural intentions (recommendations and re-experience intentions). In line with Ali et al. (2015) and Tan et al. (2013), positive experiential fulfilment and perceptions of MCTEs led to higher re-experience intention and recommendations. Participants were more likely to recommend MCTEs than to re-experience them, which Dean and Suhartanto (2019) suggest is because behavioural intentions in CT vary with the strength of pull-push motivation factors. Participants experiencing high experiential fulfilment or positive experiential states reported stronger intentions to recommend and re-experience.

Theoretical contributions

Previous research has revealed a need to explore the role of MCTEs in behavioural responses (Hung et al., 2016). Our study advances theory on MCTEs by examining the contributions of the creative experiencescape as a CT experiential stimulus, as well as the resulting CT experiential states and cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses. Given that the S-O-R framework is little used in CT (Cheng & Chen, 2021), our study adopted a dual-method netnographic-ethnographic approach to develop a holistic creative S-O-R model explaining MCTE dynamics. By integrating digital and in-situ experiential data, the model bridges methodological gaps and extends experience-based tourism research by linking creative experiencescape, experiential states, and behavioural responses (Carvalho et al., 2021; Dean & Suhartanto, 2019; Hsu et al., 2021; Zátóri et al., 2018).

This framework integrates existential authenticity (Wang, 1999) to explain how affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions interact within MCTEs. By examining how MCTEs shape participants' perceptions and experiences, our study provides a deeper



analysis of CTE formation. Consistent with Cheng and Chen (2021), our findings show that CT products not only contribute to authentic experiences characterised by novelty and uniqueness but are also crucial in generating memorable tourism experiences.

The findings advance understanding of the social, physical-organisational, and co-creative experiencescape by demonstrating how tourists construct experiential states through interactions with locals and other tourists. Extending previous CT studies conceptualising the creative experiencescape primarily in terms of physical and social environments (Carvalho et al., 2021; Cheng & Chen, 2021), our study included the co-creative experiencescape as an additional dimension to advance existing frameworks. Notably, instructors' attributes, previously given limited attention in the CT literature, were critical in the co-creation of MCTEs. Beyond the enjoyment from creative activity itself, the social experiencescape facilitated by instructors was the strongest determinant of participants' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural outcomes.

This study also makes a unique theoretical contribution by identifying the co-creative experiencescape, including co-created hands-on production, inclusion, decision-making and control. This experiencescape involves the active, collaborative physical participation of local instructors and participants in producing creative outputs during CTEs, while also ensuring accessibility and diversity. Importantly, it lets participants express their creativity and, through co-created hands-on production, create tangible reminders of local culture as personal keepsakes that reflect their unique creative tastes.

This study also contributes by reconceptualising the experiencescape – previously framed primarily as a physical environment within workshop-based CTEs – as a distinct physical-organisational experiencescape. Alongside social and co-creative experiencescapes, the studio environment and its organisational factors significantly influenced participants' cognitive and affective states. Key elements included a clean, comfortable workspace; adequate lighting; appropriate equipment; effective time management; level differentiation; and the accessibility of information and instructors before the workshop. The MCTE's broader physical context was also important. An accessible city environment embedded in everyday local life, with traditional architecture and proximity to cultural elements, was a crucial component. Creative tourists' escape motivation can explain this, namely, the desire to avoid conventional tourism settings (Wang et al., 2020). In line with Cheng and Chen (2021), who name this factor the hedonic atmosphere, the physical experiencescape is a complementary layer that enhances both social and co-creative experiencescapes. MCTEs stemmed from participants' engagement with social, physical-organisational, and co-creative experiencescapes, which evoked experiential states such as authentic involvement, learning, experiential fulfilment, peace of mind, escape, recognition, and belonging, ultimately creating memorable creative experiences and intentions to recommend and re-experience them (See Figure 6).

Practical implications

The study offers valuable insights for practitioners designing and delivering MCTEs. First, the findings demonstrate that MCTEs are not shaped solely by physical environments but emerge through the integrated orchestration of social, physical-organisational, and co-creative experiencescapes. While well-equipped studios, accessible locations, and effective organisation enhance the physical experiencescape, practitioners should recognise that physical excellence alone cannot generate memorable experiences. Despite physical shortcomings observed in the ethnographic study, participants remained deeply engaged due to strong social and co-creative dynamics. Hence, CT providers should approach experience design holistically, ensuring that physical settings support rather than overshadow social interaction and creative engagement.

Second, instructors are critical shapers of MCTEs. Participants consistently perceived instructors as mentors, facilitators, storytellers, and hosts, rather than merely technical experts. Their personal (warmth, patience, encouragement), interpersonal (interaction, approachability), and professional (pedagogical and artistic expertise) attributes decisively shaped tourists' creative experiential states and memorability. Accordingly, CT organisations should invest in instructor training beyond technical skills to include communication, intercultural sensitivity, storytelling, and facilitation. Recruiting multilingual instructors and encouraging inclusive, non-judgmental guidance can further enhance social interaction and foster recognition and belonging among participants.

Third, the co-creative experiencescape is a powerful driver of memorability and emotional engagement. Hands-on co-creation, decision-making freedom, and control enabled participants to produce personally meaningful, self-crafted souvenirs that served as tangible memory anchors, extending the experience beyond the destination. This suggests that CT products should be designed to maximise co-creation affordances, allowing participants to personalise output, work at their own pace, and express individual creativity. Emphasising uniqueness and personal ownership of creative outputs can significantly enhance experiential fulfilment and memorability.

Fourth, inclusion was a defining feature of successful MCTEs. Language-sensitive facilitation, accommodation of different skill levels, age diversity, and equitable participation enabled broad accessibility and positive experiential states. Thus, inclusive design is both an ethical consideration and a strategic advantage in CT. CT providers should therefore make inclusive practices a core design



principle by offering multilingual instruction, flexible guidance for beginners and experienced participants, and environments that encourage participation regardless of cultural or demographic differences.

Fifth, memorability is a key cognitive-affective response linking creative experiential states to behavioural outcomes. Participants were more likely to recommend and re-experience MCTEs when their experiences felt authentic, fulfilling, and personally meaningful. Hence, rather than focusing solely on satisfaction or repeat visitation, CT stakeholders should aim to strategically design memorable moments through authenticity, learning, emotional engagement, and social connection. Marketing strategies should prioritise uniqueness, personal creation, and cultural immersion, positioning CTEs as once-in-a-lifetime opportunities rather than standard tourism activities.

Sixth, the findings suggest that CT can serve as an effective tool for destinations to diversify tourism offerings, strengthen cultural engagement, and foster sustainable tourism development (Altınay Özdemir & Istanbulu Dinçer, 2022; Erul et al., 2024; Emiroglu, 2025; Lança, 2024; Puig-Cabrera et al., 2025). By supporting small-scale workshops, local artisans, and community-based creative initiatives, destinations can strengthen tourists' emotional connections while reinforcing local identity and pride. Policymakers and destination managers should therefore support CT through funding, infrastructure, and training initiatives that prioritise social interaction, co-creation, and inclusivity, thereby ensuring long-term competitiveness and experiential value.

Finally, digital tools, such as mobile applications and interactive platforms, can be leveraged to support the social and co-creative experiencescape by facilitating communication, offering tailored recommendations, and extending engagement beyond the workshop. As complementary tools rather than replacements for face-to-face interaction, digital technologies can improve accessibility and inclusivity without undermining CTE authenticity. Through such strategies, practitioners can design MCTEs that exceed participant expectations, fostering sustainable growth and competitive differentiation in the CT market.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has several limitations and offers directions for future research. First, the study focused on Portugal, whose distinctive CT infrastructure enabled in-depth contextual analysis (Geertz, 1973) but may limit transferability to other settings. Additionally, as noted by Tan et al. (2013), CTEs may produce different patterns and outcomes depending on tourists' awareness. Thus, future research could include comparative, multi-country case studies to distinguish context-specific from more generalisable CT affordances.

Second, consistent with an appreciative inquiry approach, our netnographic study prioritised positive reviews to identify successful co-creation affordances. However, this may underrepresent constraints or negative experiences that inhibit co-creation. Future research could analyse negative reviews through Sundbo's (2020) experiential dissonance framework or integrate both positive and negative reviews using sentiment analysis to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the enablers and barriers shaping co-creative tourism experiences.

Third, our ethnographic study focused on one workshop, restricting generalizability, while the findings provide analytical generalisations for similar MCTE contexts rather than broad inference (Yin, 2002). Future ethnographic research could include multiple workshops and destinations to increase transferability. Finally, quantitatively testing the proposed creative S-O-R model, perhaps with additional components, would further advance the CT literature.

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Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Grammarly Premium, ChatGPT, and QuillBot to assist with grammar and language editing. Following the use of these tools, the authors carefully reviewed and revised the text as necessary and assume full responsibility for the publication's content.

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**Appendix 1.** Emergent themes of MCTEs

Theme	Description
Creative experiencescape	
Social experiencescape	
<i>Instructor's attributes</i>	<i>Personal and interpersonal qualities:</i> supportive attitude, friendliness, patience, approachability, encouraging behaviour, non-judgmental guidance, respectful communication <i>Professional qualities:</i> technical and creative skills, pedagogical and mentorship roles, interpersonal approach
<i>Interaction</i>	Talking with other participants, meeting new people, sharing experiences, group communication, having a collaborative atmosphere, casual conversations, social exchange, and a friendly atmosphere, and interacting with hosts.
Co-creative experiencescape	
<i>Co-created hands-on production</i>	Hands-on making, tangible creative output, collaborative making
<i>Decision-making and control</i>	Making independent design choices, expressing personal ideas, and controlling creative outcomes
<i>Inclusion (accessibility and equal participation)</i>	Language-sensitive facilitation, skill-level inclusivity, equitable participation in production, and inclusive facilitation
Physical-organisational experiencescape	
<i>Studio environment</i>	Well-equipped studio, availability of tools and materials, clean and comfortable workspace, adequate lighting, a safe working environment, an inspiring atmosphere, and a small-scale/intimate space
<i>City environment</i>	Authentic local settings, integration with everyday local life, traditional architecture, walkable urban environment, proximity to cultural elements (markets, streets, heritage), calm and non-touristy atmosphere, feeling part of the city
<i>Organisational factors</i>	Clear workshop structure, well-planned session flow, time management, group size suitability, availability of materials for everyone, language facilitation (multilingual support), level differentiation (space for beginners and advanced participants), accessibility of information (before and during the workshop), smooth registration and payment process.
Creative experiential states	
Authentic involvement	Feeling truly involved, being myself during the experience, not feeling like a tourist, genuine participation, deep engagement
Learning	Acquiring new skills, understanding techniques, and gaining knowledge about tools, learning by doing, observing and applying
Experiential fulfilment	Feeling satisfied with experience, sense of achievement, pride in completed work, enjoyment of the creative process, feeling productive, experiencing personal growth
Peace of mind	Feeling relaxed and stress-free, emotional calmness, comfort in the workshop environment, feeling safe and supported, mental detachment from everyday stressors
Escape	Temporarily leaving daily routines, immersion in creative activity, a break from daily routines, trying new activities, disconnecting from the world, feeling liberated
Recognition and belonging	Feeling acknowledged by the instructor or other participants, feeling valued and appreciated, feeling part of the group, feeling welcomed and accepted, a sense of togetherness, feeling connected to others
Cognitive-affective response	
Memorability	Unforgettable experience, something I will remember, a meaningful experience, emotionally memorable, different from ordinary tourist activities
Behavioral Response	
Recommendation	I would recommend this to others, I would tell my friends about this, and share the experience with others
Re-experience intention	I would like to come back, I want to join another workshop here, I would like to reconnect with this group, returning to the same creative place