

Residents' Perceptions and Experiences of Creative Tourism in a UNESCO Creative City

Creative Tourism emerged in the early 2000s. It is characterized by the emphasis on creativity, active participation of visitors, and interaction between local communities and visitors. The municipality of Barcelos was designated a UNESCO Creative City in 2017, in the category of Crafts and Folk Art, in recognition of the diversity of artisanal practices, among which *Bordado de Crivo* (Drawn Thread Embroidery), a Portuguese intangible cultural heritage, stands out alongside pottery, woodworking, ironwork, and basketry. For more than a decade, the municipality has consistently invested in Creative Tourism as an opportunity to generate supplementary income for local artisans and to enhance the city's cultural identity.

Our study adopted a quantitative research approach, based on 619 questionnaires applied to residents of Barcelos between August 2024 and September 2025. Data were analysed using SPSS, through descriptive statistical analysis and chi-square tests.

The sample was predominantly female (55.3%) and the most representative age group was 65 years or older (34.4%). Regarding educational attainment, 26.2% have completed secondary education. Of the total respondents, 30.7% were retired, 91.6% were native to the municipality, and most of them lived in parishes within the urban perimeter.

Regarding attraction factors, residents most frequently mentioned the Galo de Barcelos (Rooster of Barcelos) (72.4%), the weekly market (52.8%), and the Festa das Cruzes (49.9%). Creative Tourism and the UNESCO Creative City designation were less mentioned, by only 1.5% and 2.9%, respectively, reflecting the fact that residents are more familiar with and regularly engage with traditional attractions such as the Galo de Barcelos and the weekly market.

Concerning participation, 28.1% reported having taken part in creative activities, while 71.9% never participated. The most common experiences were pottery (14.7%), gastronomy-related activities (7.9%), and painting (6.9%). Despite the low participation rate, 48.8% are aware of the existence of creative activities, while 51.2% are not.

For future development, residents highlighted pottery and clay-based activities (56.2%), gastronomy (51.1%), and handicrafts in general (32.5%).

The results show a mismatch between the institutional strategy for Creative Tourism and its recognition by residents. Despite the UNESCO Creative City status, participation is low, and more than half of residents are unaware of the activities, indicating weaknesses

in communication and community engagement. The appreciation of pottery, gastronomy, and handicrafts demonstrates culturally recognized resources and underlines the need to integrate residents as active agents, reinforcing sustainability, identity, and local economic potential.