

Cultural dynamics and the creative economy: the influence of fairs and events on strengthening fashion and handicrafts in local contexts

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1 Introduction

In recent decades, the creative economy has established itself as a significant field of research and policymaking focused on territorial development, particularly in contexts where culture, creativity, and identity serve as strategic assets for generating economic and symbolic value. Within this landscape, fashion and handicrafts play a pivotal role by embodying traditional knowledge, collective memories, and local identities, while simultaneously fostering income generation and strengthening creative value chains. Although cultural fairs and events are recognized as venues for the circulation of products and cultural expressions, there is still limited research analyzing their sociocultural, symbolic, and economic impacts on the creative economy at the local level. Addressing this gap, this study examines how cultural events can act as catalysts for strengthening the fashion and handicraft sectors, using the “Mercado Xique Xique” in Teresina, Piauí, as a case study. The aim is to understand how the event contributes to valuing local creative practices, increasing the visibility of artisans and fashion creators, and reinforcing territorial dynamics linked to the creative economy.

2 Development

The research is grounded in the understanding of the creative economy as a system based on transforming ideas, knowledge, and cultural expressions into economic assets as defined by Howkins (2001) and expanded by the perspective of Bendassolli et al. (2009), who view creative industries as a relational field where culture, production, consumption, and the market intersect to create value. From this standpoint, territorial development depends not only on material production but also on symbolic circulation, the formation of collaborative networks, and the legitimation of cultural practices. Consequently, cultural fairs and events transcend their role as mere commercial spaces, acting instead as environments for cultural mediation, the strengthening of identity, and the coordination of various agents within the creative economy.

The discussion also highlights the relationship between fashion, craftsmanship, and territorial identity. Craftsmanship is understood as a form of know-how integrating technique, experience, and culture, while fashion is recognized as a cultural language capable of expressing belonging, memory, and identity. Drawing on the contributions of Hall (2006), Canclini (2019), Bourdieu (1996), and Barbosa & Campbell (2007), the study demonstrates that the value of creative products is linked to the narratives, meanings, and social relationships that legitimize them, thereby reinforcing their importance to territorial development.

Methodologically, this is a qualitative study conducted through a case study approach. The empirical subject was the “Mercado Xique Xique”, investigated via document analysis, semi-structured interviews with three organizers, questionnaires administered to nine representatives of exhibiting brands, non-participant direct observation, and photographic documentation. The data were organized and interpreted using the thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), enabling the identification of categories related to cultural practices, sociocultural, symbolic, and economic impacts, and the challenges involved in strengthening the local creative economy.

The results reveal that the “Mercado Xique Xique” goes beyond its commercial function, establishing itself as a space where culture, the economy, and the territory intersect. Since its inception in 2023, the event has established itself as a meeting point for producers, consumers, artists, cultural managers, and institutions, boosting the visibility of local brands, strengthening connections across different sectors of the creative economy, and fostering new sales opportunities.

Field observations show that the layout of the exhibition space and direct interaction between producers and consumers facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, enhancing recognition of the stories and production processes embedded in the products. Furthermore, the event

fosters exchanges among designers, artisans, and institutions, encouraging the formation of collaborative networks that endure beyond the event itself and strengthen local production chains.

Another highlighted aspect is the strengthening of territorial identity. Interviews indicate that the “Mercado Xique Xique” was conceived as an environment that celebrates local culture, diversity, and a sense of belonging. The themes explored in its editions reinforce narratives tied to Piauí’s identity, allowing fashion and handicrafts to be recognized as legitimate expressions of regional culture. This symbolic dimension enhances the perceived value of the products by associating them with authenticity, memory, and traditional knowledge.

Documentary analysis and questionnaires administered to exhibitors corroborate these findings, demonstrating increased brand visibility, expanded sales opportunities, and strengthened collaborative networks. Participants highlight benefits such as greater brand recognition, a growing customer base, and the creation of new partnerships, demonstrating that the “Mercado Xique Xique” acts simultaneously as a mechanism for symbolic legitimation and the economic strengthening of creative enterprises.

3 Conclusion

The results demonstrate that the “Mercado Xique Xique” plays a significant role in enhancing the value of local production, symbolically legitimizing fashion and handicrafts, expanding sales opportunities, and establishing collaborative networks among various actors in the creative economy. However, the analysis also highlights limitations stemming from the episodic nature of these initiatives and the lack of sufficient coordination between such events and long-term public policies. Consequently, consolidating the observed impacts requires structural strategies that foster integration among government bodies, educational institutions, cultural agents, and the productive sector, thereby strengthening enduring mechanisms for cooperation and territorial development.

It is concluded that the “Mercado Xique Xique” represents a significant example of the integration of culture, economy, and territory,

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demonstrating that markets and cultural events can serve as strategic tools for strengthening fashion and handicrafts within local contexts. By fostering the exchange of knowledge, promoting territorial identity, strengthening collaborative networks, and increasing the visibility of local products, the event highlights the potential of the creative economy as a driver of sustainable territorial development and provides insights for future research and the formulation of public policies aimed at valuing creative territories¹.

1 English translation and language revision by: Rodrigo O'Brien de Carvalho holds a Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching from the State University of Piauí (2006) and a postgraduate specialization in Applied Linguistics from the same institution (2013). E-mail: rodrigo.obrien@ifpi.edu.br

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